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Hack

ESSAYS

MORAL

AND

LITERARY.

BY

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VOLUME THE SECOND.

ΜΗ ΖΩΗΝ ΜΕΤ' ΑΜΟΥΣΙΑΣ.

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PREFACE.

IT has been ſaid that the preface is the moſt difficult part of a book. To ſpeak of one's ſelf with delicacy, is indeed at all times difficult; but when the omiſſion would be improper, the difficulty muſt be overcome.

Since the appearance of the ſecond edition of Eſſays Moral and Literary, it has been ſuggeſted to their author, by thoſe whom the learned revere, that another volume would not be unacceptable. He therefore preſents the ſubſequent pages to the Public, and hopes that a modeſt attempt to amuſe and inſtruct, will want little apology.

He has ever been attached to letters as an amuſement, and has derived an inward ſatisfaction of the pureſt and ſincereſt kind from literary purſuits. Every one who reads and reflects, will ſometimes be induced to commit his obſervations to writing; and if he perceives that others are pleaſed with them, he will find the complacency which he experiences from commendation, and the pleaſure proceeding from doing ſomething for the benefit and entertainment of the community, ſtrong temptations to impart his ideas to the public. Such were the author's ſole inducements; for all who are perſonally acquainted with him will readily believe him when he declares, that intereſt is, and has been, entirely diſregarded.

In

In whatever manner his book ſhall be received, he will not think the time loſt that was ſpent in compoſing it, ſince it was paſſed at leaſt innocently, and furniſhed a ſweet relief in thoſe moments of ſorrow which are occaſionally the lot of all who feel and think, and from which he has not been exempted.

Miſtakes he may have committed, and he is ready to acknowledge them. For though he may have aſſerted with confidence the dictates of his conviction at the time he wrote, yet he is not dogmatical, nor will he maintain error with obſtinacy.

From miſcellaneous reading on ſubjects of morality and criticiſm, he has himſelf

himſelf derived much pleaſure, and will be happy in the reflection, if he can in any degree furniſh, for an age that delights in reading, a ſimilar entertainment.

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ESSAY I.

ON ESSAY WRITING.

THOSE Sages of antiquity, who, from the improvements in knowledge and virtue, to which they advanced human nature, had the leaſt dubious title to the appellation of wiſe men, were yet too modeſt to aſſume a name which had the appearance of oſtentation, and rather choſe to be called Philoſophers, or Lovers of Wiſdom. From ſimilar motives, many of the Moderns, who have written with great ſkill on ſubjects of morality and ſcience, have entitled their productions, Eſſays; a name, which, though it may now convey the idea of regular treatiſes and diſſertations, is ſynonymous with the word

attempts, and means no more than endeavours to inſtruct or amuſe. A writer who, at a late period, purſuing the track of thoſe celebrated authors who preceded him, boldly promiſes improvement on his predeceſſors, is received with that indignation which arrogance, even when ſupported by merit, naturally excites; but he who profeſſes only an attempt, however unſucceſsful, has a claim to candour and indulgence. Failure has ceaſed to be ridiculous, where preſumption has not made pretenſions, nor confidence anticipated ſucceſs.

Many works therefore, diſtinguiſhed by this title, have been well received, and have obtained a very exalted place in the ſcale of literary honours. None have become more popular in our own country, than thoſe periodical papers, which were publiſhed by the Tatler, the Guardian, and the Spectator, and which have been ſucceſsfully imitated by later writers. The taſte and morals of the nation have been more generally improved by theſe excellent, though ſhort and de-

tached compoſitions, than by long regular elaborate ſyſtems. They were addreſſed to the heart and imagination, and fitted for the haunts of men engaged in the employments of common life; while ſcientific treatiſes of ethics were calculated only for the exerciſe of ſcholaſtic diſputation; and their influence on the conduct of life, if they ever poſſeſſed any, was circumſcribed within narrow limits. Addiſon, like Socrates, to whom he has been often compared, brought down knowledge from thoſe heights which were acceſſible only to profeſſed ſcholars, and placed it within the reach of all, who, to natural and common ſenſe, added the advantage of a common education. He it was that ſtripped philoſophy of that unbecoming garb in which ſhe had been diſguiſed by her miſtaken followers, and repreſented her attired by the Graces, like the Goddeſs of Beauty.

The votaries of the ſeverer muſes have ſometimes ventured to deſpiſe this entertaining ſpecies of productions as futile and ſuperficial. They have aſſerted

that truth needs not embelliſhment, and that the ornaments which ſhe borrows from imagination, are no leſs unbecoming than unneceſſary. But the real utility of literary labours is to be eſtimated by the extent of their influence on the national manners and underſtanding. Truth, however, delivered with that ſyſtematic preciſion which is approved in the ſchools of philoſophy, will not have charms enough to detain the common reader who takes up a book for the amuſement of a leiſure hour, and who muſt be tempted to admit inſtruction, by the proſpect of receiving pleaſure. In every thouſand of thoſe that have been delighted with the papers of Addiſon, perhaps not more than one has heard of the Principia of Newton. Praiſes adequate to the merits of ſo exalted a genius, as was his who diſcovered the true ſyſtem of the univerſe, can never be beſtowed; nor is it detraction from his fame to aſſert, that ſince his theories require a painful attention to comprehend them, they will not generally be attended to in a commercial country like

our

our own, where only the ſhort interval which the purſuit of gain, and the practice of mechanic arts affords, will be devoted to letters by the more numerous claſſes of the community. And indeed it muſt be confeſſed, that though the doctrine of attraction, or of light and colours, may be highly intereſting to the man of ſcience, and may qualify him for a profeſſor's chair, or a ſeat at the board of longitude, yet it ſeems not to have any tendency to render him better in his civil and ſocial relations. I never could find that the Elements of Euclid taught any one to be a better father, huſband, ſon, or citizen; nor did I ever hear that he who took the moſt pains to ſquare the circle, and ſpent his life in meaſuring angles and drawing diagrams, was at all more ſkilful in diſcovering the point of moral perfection, or in delineating the line of perſonal and of relative duty.

The great Bacon who pointed out the path to thoſe ſublime heights in philoſophy, at which his followers have arrived,

would never have brought his ſpeculations home to men's buſineſs and boſoms, to uſe his own expreſſions, if he had not written his Eſſays; a work, which, as it was of the moſt extenſive conſequence and moſt eaſily underſtood, was the moſt popular of all his productions. The remarks contained in it are ſuch as ſhew that he had an intimate knowledge of the human heart, and they have a tendency to direct mankind in the right conduct of life. They are the inſtitutes of a ſcience which all wiſh to learn; but how few, in compariſon, are intereſted in the *Novum Organum?* Whether a man adopt the hypothetical or experimental philoſophy, is a matter of indifference to his moral conduct, nor is a Carteſian neceſſarily better or worſe than the admirer of the more modern and more probable ſyſtem. An error in phyſics is ſeldom productive of conſequences injurious to one's neighbour or one's ſelf. Bacon diſcovered new tracks of learning; he gave directions to purſue them; he baniſhed hypotheſis, and introduced

duced experiment; he is deſervedly the glory of our nation as the reſtorer of true philoſophy; but yet, without detracting from his merits, we may expreſs our regret that he did not beſtow more time and pains on the grand ſcience of man. He appears, from the ſpecimens he has left us, to have been better qualified to advance it to perfection than any modern. The example, however, of ſo profound, and in general ſo methodical, a writer, is ſufficient to vindicate from the charge of futility, thoſe little compoſitions, which, without the formality of ſtudied treatiſes, aim at inſtructing the reader in the truths of ethics, of criticiſm, and of philoſophy.

In an age when books and a competent education are eaſily attainable, all ranks will be found to devote a conſiderable portion of their unemployed time to ſome kind of reading. But what ſhall they read during the interval of half an hour, interrupted perhaps by the prattle of children, or the impertinence of viſitors, or the calls of buſi-

neſs? not a long tedious treatiſe, divided and ſubdivided, and requiring at leaſt the unſuſpended attention of half a day fully to comprehend the whole. They ſeek relaxation, but they find a taſk; irkſome, becauſe it requires cloſe application; and unimproving, becauſe that application can only be deſultory. But hard indeed muſt be his lot, who, in the moſt active and moſt diſſipated ſcenes of life, cannot beſtow that ſmall ſpace of time required in the peruſal of an Eſſay of a few pages. He who poſſeſſes the Religion of Nature Delineated, will not eaſily find a better guide, but yet he will oftener be tempted to take the Spectator from his ſhelves. He who has never thought of reading the tedious, though inſtructive, conferences of Arrian, has perhaps committed to memory the Enchiridion of Epictetus. Even the form, the ſize, the weight of the volume are circumſtances which deſerve to be attended to in a ſubordinate degree, ſince they may contribute to render its influence more diffuſive. Who could bear

bear to carry a folio with him in his chariot, or recline on a ſofa with a heavy quarto in his hand?

It muſt not, however, be ſuppoſed, that this kind of works is adapted only to the ſuperficial reader. Many ſubjects of morality and learning have been conciſely diſcuſſed in a few pages, with a depth, ſolidity, and originality of thought, rarely exceeded in any formal diſſertation. The works of our Engliſh divines, the beſt moraliſts in the world, have ſometimes loſt their effect by their prolixity: for the mind of man, though comprehenſive to a very great degree, is yet circumſcribed within certain bounds, and like a full veſſel, ſuffers all that is ſuperfluous to run to waſte*. But the periodical Eſſay ſatisfies the ſubject, without fatiguing attention, or over burthening the memory.

* Omne ſupervacuum pleno de pectore manat.

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The detached nature of theſe writings, enables the writer to vary his ſtyle without impropriety, to be grave or gay, humorous or ſevere; to lay down poſitive rules, or to teach by example; to ſpeak in his own perſon, or to introduce an inſtructive tale. Every volume contains a variety of ſubjects treated in various manners, and ſuited to the diſpoſitions of different readers, or of the ſame reader at different times. Thus is idleneſs rendered attentive, and the liſtleſs moments of leiſure are filled up with the advantages of ſtudy, unmixed with the toil of formal application. The ſaunterer is deceived into employment, and the vicious, the diſſipated, the buſy, are, as it were, in ſpite of themſelves, engaged in literary and philoſophical contemplation.

Thus extenſively uſeful and entertaining, no wonder Eſſays are more univerſally read than any other productions extant. The names and works of Montaigne, of Bacon, of Temple, of Addiſon, of Steele, and of their ſucceſsful follow-

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ers, are held in a degree of eſteem, which neither the lapſe of time nor the caprice of faſhion has been able to diminiſh. There is ſcarcely an individual, not only of thoſe who profeſs learning, but of thoſe who devote any of their time to reading, who has not digeſted the Spectators. Placed, however, in our hands in the earlieſt period of life, they have loſt, in the eyes of many readers, the charm of novelty. To theſe perhaps new attempts or Eſſays, ſimilar at leaſt in kind, may afford entertainment. Nor ſhould they be checked as preſumptuous, ſince, without the ſpirit of adventure, modern literature would be at a ſtand. The fame of thoſe writers, however great, is but adequate to their merits; but though it is true, they have preſented us with much gold, much fine gold, yet the mine is rich, and will never be exhauſted.

From the various combination of human paſſions, originally few in number, ariſes an infinite variety of moral appearances.

pearances. Political revolutions, religious reformations, the whims of faſhion, and the changes in literature, enable the moral writer, when he travels even in a beaten road, to diſcover proſpects hitherto unobſerved.

The metropolis of a great empire flouriſhing in arts and commerce, is, as it were, the hot-bed of manners, in which every plant ſhoots up with unreſtrained luxuriance. In a harveſt ſo plentiful, not only thoſe who firſt put the ſickle to it, are rewarded with abundance, but many a loaded ſheaf remains to be picked up by the careful gleaner. And happily for the morals, as well as underſtandings of our nation, the labourers have not been few nor unſucceſsful.

The preſent age has been called an age of literary luxury; nor let it bluſh at the appellation. The paſſion for letters is attended with the ſweeteſt ſatisfactions; and the indulgence of it tends to ſilence the importunity of other paſſions, which can ſeldom be gratified without conſequent miſery.

ESSAY II.

CLASSICAL LEARNING VINDICATED.

A FEW men of wit and genius, who, in a long intercourſe with the faſhionable world, had probably forgotten that little knowledge of the ancient languages and authors, which they had acquired at ſchool, have endeavoured to bring into diſcredit the prevailing mode of education, which devotes ſo much time to the ſtudy of Grecian and Roman literature. Men of uncommon natural parts, they have, perhaps, beſides, enjoyed all thoſe advantages of good company and extenſive commerce with the living world, which both excite, and give occaſion to diſplay, great abilities. They were, therefore, diſtinguiſhed characters in their time. But, whatever figure they made, they would

would have ſhone with ſtill greater luſtre, if they had retained a tincture of that elegance and liberality of ſentiment which the mind acquires by a ſtudy of the claſſics, and which contributes more to form the true Gentleman, than the ſubſtituted ornaments of modern affectation.

The example of theſe illuſtrious, but ſuperficial perſonages, has induced every prater, who has been taught to liſp broken French, and dance a minuet, to laugh at the lubberly boy, as he calls him, who ſpends a dozen years at ſchool, in learning Greek and Latin. He unfairly repreſents this time, as ſpent ſolely in acquiring the languages; ignorant, perhaps, that a taſte is often formed in it for thoſe authors, which furniſh the pureſt and the moſt elegant pleaſures during the remainder of life.

The pert vivacity of aſſured ignorance has often perſuaded the fond mother to diſcard the tutor for the dancing-maſter; to be more ſolicitous that the hopes of the family, the heir, perhaps, to a title, an eſtate,

eſtate, and even a ſhare of legiſlation, ſhould be taught to hold up his head, than be furniſhed with thoſe ideas, which would render him truly happy in himſelf, and an honour and advantage to his friends and to his country.

Even among thoſe who are fully ſenſible of the neceſſity of improving the beauties of the mind, as well as the graces of the perſon, there prevails a predilection for modern languages and modern literature to the excluſion of the ancient. In the idea of theſe, a ſufficient ſtock of hiſtorical knowledge is to be gained by an attention to the events of the two or three laſt centuries; and a ſufficient acquaintance with philoſophy and polite learning, from a peruſal of the writers of France and Italy. Collections of letters and ſtate-papers, and the epigrammatic narratives of the Hiſtorian of Ferney, are to ſupply the place of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Livy. Arioſto, Taſſo, and Boileau, are read in preference to Homer, Virgil, and Horace; and the works of Voltaire alone are ſubſti-

tuted

tuted in the place of all the poetry, all the philoſophy, and all the hiſtory that ever was written. In conſequence of theſe miſtaken notions, our great grammar-ſchools, that have produced ſo many ornaments of human nature, are exploded by many, as the ſeats of illiberal manners and of antiquated learning. To ſome academy, as it is preſumptuouſly called, the poor youth is ſent, in order to be trained to wiſdom and virtue, under the direction of ſuch ſages as a French dancer and a Swiſs renegado.

In anſwer to the charge, that illiberal manners are the diſgraceful characteriſtic of boys educated in grammar-ſchools, I muſt confeſs I am pleaſed with the natural ſimplicity, and even rudeneſs, of that age of ſprightlineſs and inexperience; nor do I know a ſight more truly ridiculous, than that of a boy of fourteen affecting the Graces, and behaving among his ſuperiors in age and attainments, with all the diſguſting eaſe of ſelf-ſufficiency. The ſame natural good ſenſe, which makes the boy act in character, will teach the man

man a manly behaviour. And I believe every judicious perſon had rather ſee his ſon partaking of the noiſy mirth of his ſchool-fellows, than bowing and grinning in the inſipid circle of a card-party.

With reſpect to the other charge, that claſſical education is a little out of faſhion in ſome polite circles, we confeſs and lament its juſtneſs. But though we allow faſhion to dictate without controul the exact dimenſions of a buckle or a head-dreſs; yet a regard for the honour and happineſs of human nature induces us to diſpute her ſovereign authority in thoſe things on which depend the manners and ſentiments of the riſing generation.

If, however, it is maintained, that the true gentleman, the man of enlarged notions and poliſhed taſte, cannot, by any method of education, be ſo well formed, as by the claſſical, yet it by no means follows, that thoſe whoſe happineſs muſt, in a great meaſure, depend on leſs comprehenſive views of men and things, ſhould be inſtructed in the ſame mode. The time that is uſually ſpent in Lilly's

Grammar, and in acquiring juſt ſo much knowledge of the Latin language as may inſpire vanity, but cannot enable a young man to enter into the ſpirit of an author, is certainly ill-beſtowed. He who is deſigned for a mercantile life had much better be reading Wingate's Arithmetic than Cordery's Colloquies, and learning the Rule of Three than the Syntax. I have often pitied the poor boy, who has been whipt through all the claſſes of a ſchool, as a preparation for a life to be ſpent in meaſuring tape and weighing plumbs. But the foundation of the miſtake is obvious. There is, perhaps, a free-ſchool in the neighbourhood, to which the barber of the place, the blackſmith, and the day-labourer, has as good a right to ſend a ſon, as the vicar and lord of the manor. The well-meaning parent is reſolved his boy ſhall learn Latin, for it will make him an adept in an argument, and though he cannot give him houſes and land, he is determined to beſtow good learning upon him, which, he has often read on the cover of his grand-

mother's Pilgrims Progreſs, ſtill retains peculiar excellence, even when houſe and land are gone and ſpent. To remonſtrate is vain; and I knew a diſcreet perſon who adviſed a copper-ſmith, of that inferior claſs commonly called tinkers, to teach his ſon his own craft, rather than put him to the Latin ſchool; but who, inſtead of the thanks which ſuch wiſe counſel deſerved, was treated with all that abuſe which indigence, when it thinks itſelf inſulted, can beſtow.

The miſtakes of well-meaning ignorance are to be pitied and excuſed. But how ſhall we apologize for thoſe who move in a higher ſphere, and who cannot but know, that the greateſt men our nation has produced, whether greatneſs is eſtimated by power, wealth, birth, title, knowledge, or virtue, have laid the foundation of their eminence in our grammar ſchools, where little elſe was taught but claſſical learning? how ſhall we apologize for theſe, when they ſlight a mode of education which the experience of ages has proved to be efficacious, and adopt

a new one, which, from its ſuperficial nature, cannot form the man of dignity, or of juſt taſte? Would More, Sidney, Raleigh, Milton, Temple, and many others, have arrived at that perfection of character, at which they aſpired, under the ſuperintendence of a *petit Maitre?*

Some leading authors ſeem to wiſh that all our literary inquiries ſhould be limited to that period which they are pleaſed to diſtinguiſh by calling it the age of Lewis XIV. It is indeed a ſhining interval in the revolutions of time; but moſt of the great characters that appeared in it, were formed on the models of a better age, the age of Auguſtus, or of Pericles. And I know not, whether the glorious reign of our own Elizabeth might not exhibit examples of probity and learning, valour and patriotiſm, more proper for the imitation of an Engliſhman, than thoſe of any epoch in the annals of our rival nation.

While, however, we reprobate the idea of confining attention to the writings and tranſactions of the laſt three

hundred years, it muſt be confeſſed that this period deſerves regard. The inventions of the compaſs, of printing, of gunpowder, and a conſequent ſpirit of enterprize, have rendered modern times peculiarly intereſting. During this period, the French nation, to uſe their own idea, have been remarkably awakened; nor will any man of letters, with juſt pretenſions to taſte, reſt ſatisfied, without reading the works of Fenelon, of Fontenelle, of Boileau, and ſeveral others who wrote in the true ſpirit of the antients. He will, after all, acknowledge, that they are but imitations of thoſe originals, which are no leſs open to us than they were to them; and will confeſs it to be a want of ſpirit, to drink at the diſtant ſtream, when we have acceſs to the fountain. If we can be contented with Imitations, we have excellent ones in the works of Pope and Addiſon. But what ſculptor would be ſatisfied with examining the plaſter buſt, who was at liberty to walk in the Florentine gallery.

There is ſomething in the character of an Engliſhman analogous to the diſpoſition of an old Roman. He has a natural generoſity, and love of independence. He has alſo a gravity of temper, better adapted to mental and moral improvement, than any other; becauſe more capable of fixed attention. French vivacity is foreign to his nature; faſhion, indeed, makes him ſometimes adopt it, but it ſits awkwardly on him, leſſens his inward conſciouſneſs of dignity, and lowers him no leſs in the eſtimation of others. The ideas of a Roman are congenial to him. His mind, when cultivated by a claſſical education, ſhoots up to maturity with the vigour of an indigenous plant, but thrives ſlowly, like the exotic, when nurtured only by the ſlender aid of French diſcipline.

The poliſh of external grace may be deferred till the approach of manhood. When ſolidity is obtained by purſuing the modes preſcribed by our forefathers, then may the file be uſed. The firm ſubſtance will bear attrition,

and

and the luſtre then acquired will be durable. A ſenſible father, who is not himſelf a convert to the effeminacy of the times, had rather ſee a ſon forming himſelf as a ſcholar and a man, on the example of an old Roman or Athenian, than imitating, in his writings and actions, the undignified vivacity of a modern Frenchman or Italian. He had rather ſee him, in ſpite of the remonſtrances of his nurſe, flogged through a public ſchool by a Buſby, than conducted through the courts of Europe by a cringing valet. Let him but have digeſted his Homer, his Virgil, and his Cicero, and he will never appear deficient in the literary accompliſhments of a gentleman. Let him poſſeſs that perſonal dignity which real merit only can confer, and his good reception in the world will be ſecure, though he ſhould never have read a page of Lord Cheſterfield.

Surely, no one will deny that the two principal objects in a well-conducted education, are to cultivate a good heart,

and to give the underſtanding ſuch additional ſtrength and information, as may ſafely direct the heart in the various events of life, and teach the poſſeſſor of it to act up to the dignity of human nature. But the merely ornamental attainments have little tendency to accompliſh either of theſe purpoſes. On the contrary, as they add a luſtre without ſolidity, they induce idleneſs to content itſelf with the appearances of merit, which are eaſily aſſumed, and to neglect the reality as attainable only by painful application. They inſpire confidence without worth to ſupport it; they give an air of inſolent ſuperiority which commonly defeats their own purpoſe of pleaſing; and however they may cauſe admiration in the diſſipated and ſuperficial, they are little eſteemed by thoſe, whoſe applauſe is valuable.

ESSAY III.

STRICTURES ON MODERN ETHICS.

THE neglect of the claſſics, and of the ancient moral philoſophers, in modern education, tends no leſs to injure virtue, and every valuable and lovely diſpoſition of the heart, than to corrupt taſte, and degrade dignity.

It is true indeed, the preſent times compared with the ancient, are properly the old age of the world. And if we reaſon from analogy, we muſt conclude, that they ſurpaſs in knowledge the ages which have preceded. Accordingly we find in all thoſe things, a ſkill in which neceſſarily depends on long experience and extenſive obſervation, the moderns poſſeſs an indiſputable ſuperiority. In uſeful ſcience, and true philoſophy, the ancients fall ſo ſhort,

as

as not to bear the compariſon. Ariſtotle and Pliny committed their dreams to writing, inſtead of an authentic natural hiſtory, and a rational ſyſtem of phyſics. No one can juſtly queſtion their ingenuity, but they wanted proper matter for its exertion. They were contented with reports, not only concerning ſubjects which they had no opportunity of examining, but concerning thoſe which fell under their notice. They induced general remarks from too ſmall a number of particulars. Pliny ſeems to have written a phyſical romance, with an intention to entertain, rather than diſcover and communicate ſevere truths. The more marvellous his repreſentation, the better it anſwered his purpoſe, and it was not very likely to be ſtrictly canvaſſed in an age when the true ſpirit of philoſophical inquiry was unknown. Ptolemy's ſyſtem was fanciful and abſurd. Euclid was indeed truly great, and to his inventions the moderns are chiefly indebted for their improvements. But in his own time they ſeem to have terminated in ſpeculation.

Of

Of Archimedes, prodigies are related. His mode of diſcovering the alloy of gold is an uſeful invention, but does not exceed, in point of ingenuity, many devices of the modern mechanic. The account of his burning a diſtant fleet by mirrors is not generally believed; and if it is true, a modern Frenchman is ſaid to have diſcovered how it was effected, which required a ſagacity little inferior to that of the original inventor. The ancients had not thoſe inſtruments of ſcience, the air-pump, the teleſcope, and the microſcope. And among their principal obſtructions, is to be numbered, the want of a conviction of the futility of hypotheſis, unſupported by experiment. While the fancy was allowed to amuſe itſelf in framing ſyſtems of its own, reaſon would not ſubmit to the painful taſk of cloſe examination. The ſincereſt admirer of the ancients will therefore, without reluctance, give up their pretenſions to ſcientific excellence; and though he will recommend the ſtudy of Pliny as a claſſic who writes agreeably, yet will he adviſe the

votary of ſcience to ſubſtitute, in the place of him and of all the ancient naturaliſts, the works of Boyle, of Newton, of Buffon, and of the numerous writers in the Philoſophical Tranſactions.

But for their defects in natural, they fully compenſate by their excellence in moral, philoſophy. Mechanical inſtruments were not wanted to make obſervations on human nature. Natural ſagacity, improved by generous education, and exerciſed in a civilized community, was enabled to make juſt concluſions concerning the powers, the paſſions, the duties, the vices of man as an individual, and as connected with others in domeſtic, ſocial, and civil relations. The knowledge of nature and her operations, compared with the knowledge of ourſelves and of our duty, is of ſmall conſequence. Senſible of this at a very early period, Socrates checked the flight of philoſophy ſoaring to the airy regions of ſpeculative phyſics, and taught her to walk among the haunts of men.

The

The ſages who iſſued from his ſchool, are the Newtons of ethical ſcience. If antiquity cannot produce a rival to this great modern, neither can later times exhibit moral writers equal to Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero, in the juſtneſs of their ſentiments and the beauty of their expreſſion. All of them have this diſtinction to ſeparate them from the inventors of modern ſyſtems, that they viewed humanity in its true and honorable light, and urged mankind to aim at perfection, by encouraging repreſentations of the extent of their powers and the dignity of their nature.

It is juſtly remarked, that our Engliſh divines are the beſt moraliſts which the world ever produced. But this is eaſily accounted for. They eſtabliſhed their precepts on the firm baſis of revealed religion, and not on the ſandy foundation of human ſyſtems. But the misfortune is, that they are little attended to by thoſe who ſtand moſt in need of reformation. The libertine, the man of the world, the polite modern philoſopher,

pher, has been taught to aſſociate the idea of dulneſs to a ſermon, and would fear the imputation of prejudice, if he were to profeſs a belief of received religions, and conform his actions to their precepts. His creed is formed from the opinions of Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Helvetius, Hume, and many others who have of late perverted taſte, genius, and learning, to the purpoſes of ſupporting libertiniſm in morals and opinions.

It is not likely that he who is taught to look upon himſelf only as an animal, furniſhed indeed with a ſuperior degree of ſagacity, but like his fellow-brutes doomed to periſh for ever at death, ſhould poſſeſs that elevation of ſentiment which is neceſſary to conſtitute the great man in the private as well as the public ſcenes of life. His principles neceſſarily lead him to aſſimilate with thoſe animals among whom he is ambitious of being numbered. The enjoyments of ſenſe will be, in his idea, the chief good; and that ſevere virtue which can alone render him ſerviceable to the great community

munity of mankind, or diſtinguiſh him honorably in the ſociety of which he is a member, he will eſteem the characteriſtic of viſionary enthuſiaſts, who know not the nature of man and the end of his exiſtence.

To have that reverence for one's ſelf, which ariſes from a juſt ſenſe of the ſuperior nature and endowments of a human creature, was a precept of the earlieſt philoſophers*, and was thought to be the beſt ſecurity for a virtuous and generous conduct. It is not pride; for pride conſiſts in arrogating merits to which it has no claim; but it is an adequate idea of our own dignity in the ſcale of being, and a reſolution to ſupport it. But how ſhould he think or act like the Lord of the Creation, who is taught by the inſinuations of modern philoſophers, that man is to be claſſed in the ſame ſpecies with the ape, the monkey, and the orang outang?

Among the profligate, indeed, and the uninſtructed, we ſee humanity ſadly

* Παντων δε μαλιστ' αισχυνεο σαυτον. PYTH.

dege-

degenerated. Attentive only to the ſolicitations of the ſenſes, and obedient to every paſſion, the vulgar, both of the higher and the lower ranks, lead a life truly and merely animal. If, however, it be wiſdom to live according to nature, and the newly divulged opinion, that man is no more by nature, than a ſagacious brute, be true, then are the baſeſt and moſt worthleſs of mankind the patterns of imitation, and the only philoſophers. Education, on theſe principles, is no longer neceſſary. The paſſions are competent guides, and the more violent they are, the more unambiguous their directions. Let our ſchools be ſhut up, for why ſhould we be at the pains to ſtudy, while true wiſdom and virtue are to be learned at an eaſy rate, of our brother beaſts in the ſtable and the dog-kennel?

It has been the aim of Poets, Legiſlators, Sages, and Reformers, to advance human nature from its primeval rudeneſs, to all the perfection of which it is capable in a ſtate of civilization. Men in general have willingly followed their dictates,

and

and have found progreſſive happineſs in progreſſive improvement. It was reſerved for the preſent age of paradox, to reconcile the idea of advancement with retrograde motion, of improving human life, by reſtoring habits, principles, and weakneſſes, long exploded and overcome. It is well known, that ſeveral celebrated writers have inferred the abſurdity of many, not only innocent, but laudable and beneficial notions and practices, from their being unknown, or different from thoſe eſtabliſhed in ſavage nations. In order to imbibe ideas of decency and moral fitneſs, they have obliquely referred us to the groves of Otaheite. That ſuch writers ſhould have appeared, is wonderful; but it is ſtill more ſo, that they have found numerous readers and admirers. And it is a ſtriking event in the hiſtory of mankind, that after the efforts of ſeveral thouſand years in promoting civilization, many were found deſirous of returning to the wretched practices of ſavage life.

But even he who is taught to revere the wiſdom of the naked Indian, and to deſpiſe the improvements of his own times and nation, is more likely to think and act with dignity, than the man who believes himſelf a machine. Such an one, to be conſiſtent, muſt renounce the idea of the ſoul's ſupremacy over the actions of the body, and muſt reſign himſelf to the impulſe of that blood, of which alone he believes himſelf to conſiſt. As an engine he will yield to every motion without reſiſtance; for the perfection of the machine depends on its moving with the leaſt poſſible friction or impediment. The miſtake of him who looks on himſelf in this light, is equally abſurd with that of the hypochondriac viſionary, who, in the temporary madneſs of his reverie, imagines himſelf a gooſe or an addled egg.

The ſubtile diſputatious ſtyle and manner in which the modern philoſopher vents his ſceptical ideas, though it may give his diſciples a turn for metaphyſics, and teach them to involve a diſpute in perplexity,

perplexity, has very little tendency to improve the heart, to give a clearneſs of conception, or to teach a frank and manly conduct.

Abſurd and pernicious as are moſt of the opinions advanced and maintained by modern philoſophy; yet an elegance of ſtyle, a vivacity of expreſſion, a ſingularity of ſentiment, have had charms ſufficient to recommend it to many whoſe badneſs of heart is only equalled by the weakneſs of their underſtandings: weakneſs, I ſay, for cunning is not wiſdom. Many of the great, the degenerate deſcendants of a debauched nobility, whoſe little minds have received the ſmall degree of improvement of which they were capable, from a French maſter; are the profeſſed diſciples of Voltaire: and the offenſive ſwarms of paltry pretenders to wit and genius, who ground their pretenſions on blaſpheming their God and calumniating their neighbour; and who prove the depravity of human nature by their own baſeneſs, are the admirers of Hume and

Bolingbroke. This corruption has already ſpread far and wide, diſſolving the bands of ſociety, and diffuſing perſonal miſery. Whenever it ſhall become general, there is no doubt but that the over-ruling Providence which left not one ſtone upon another in Babylon, ſhall ſweep away the nation in which it prevails, with the beſom of deſtruction.

It is with a pleaſure equal to that of turning from a putrifying carcaſe, to behold the living body in a ſtate of youth and beauty, that I leave the poor inventions of the vain ſceptic, and the gloomy metaphyſician, to recollect the names and opinions of Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero. From theſe I learn, that I have a ſoul within me, that ſhall ſurvive its periſhable habitation. Theſe inform me, that human nature approaches to the divine; that virtue will make me happy in myſelf, and recommend me to the favour of that Being, who conſtantly ſuperintends the world he firſt created.

The philoſophy of the moderns excludes religion. Infidelity is its baſis. But can

there be a truly great man without religion? There may be a cunning, a witty, an audacious man; but there cannot be a great man without religion. Nor will he become a good ſenator, a good judge, a good commander, or fill the lower departments of civil and ſocial life with integrity and honour, who diſregards an oath, and from principle ſeeks only ſelf-intereſt and private gratification.

The man of the world, it is true, will often diſcharge the duties of his ſtation with regular propriety. A regard for fame, a deſire to enlarge and to preſerve connections, will keep him within the bounds of apparent rectitude. But, where deviation can be concealed, where compliance with temptation is compatible with ſafety, what ſhall reſtrain him? Nothing in the moral ſyſtem of a modern unbeliever.

ESSAY IV.

ON THE RETIREMENT OF A COUNTRY TOWN.

Romæ rus optas, abſentem ruſticus urbem
Tollis ad aſtra—— HOR.

SIR,

MY father had a lucrative place in the Cuſtoms; but as his family was large, he was unable to leave us fortunes, and contented himſelf with placing us in ſuch ſituations in the world, as would give us an opportunity of acquiring a decent proviſion, if we ſhould not be wanting to ourſelves. It was my lot, after having received a tincture of claſſical education, to be apprenticed to a genteel buſineſs at the weſt end of the town. As ſoon as I was out of my time, I ſet up for myſelf; and though I cannot boaſt that I was ever in a very great way, yet, by attention and frugality, I had accumulated, at the age

age of forty, a ſum ſufficient to enable me to live in a comfortable manner, without the anxiety and confinement of trade. A handſome legacy from a relation of my wife, at once determined me, in my long meditated intention, to ſell off at prime coſt, and retire.

I had always entertained a great idea of the happineſs of living in the country. It was, indeed, natural in one who had lived near forty years in a duſty warehouſe, amidſt the dirt, ſmoke, and noiſe of the Strand; and who had ſeldom made an excurſion beyond the cake-houſe at Hoxton, or the bowling-green at Hackney.

One morning, while I was revolving in my mind the idea of retirement, I happened to caſt my eye on an advertiſement in the news-paper, in which a houſe, garden, and grounds, in a market town, about five and thirty miles from London, were announced to be let at fifty pounds a year. This appeared to me too advantageous a bargain to be neglected; for, you muſt know, I gave a hundred a year

for my ſhop, the area of which was no more than three yards by four; and here were twenty acres of land, and a manſion that would contain my houſe ten times over, to be let for half the money. There was no time to be loſt: I ſhut up ſhop, took my wife and family down, and ſettled immediately.

As I did not go into the country on an œconomical plan, I was reſolved to launch out a little, and live, as I could very well afford it, in a moderately genteel ſtyle. I ſet up a poſt-chaiſe, kept ſeveral horſes, and two livery-ſervants. This appearance put me on a level with the beſt families in the neighbourhood, and accordingly I was viſited by all who claimed the rank of gentlefolks.

But, alas! I did not find in this place that happineſs which I expected. I have been convinced by experience, that a market town is not a proper ſituation for thoſe to retire to, who wiſh to taſte the pleaſures of rural life, and to paſs the evening of their days in a ſtate of tranquillity. That you may judge of the impro-

priety

priety of ſuch a retreat, I ſhall give you an account of my reception in it, and of ſeveral circumſtances, which render it leſs fit for the enjoyments of thoſe peaceful and domeſtic pleaſures, which every one that retires from buſineſs expects, than the noiſieſt ſtreet in the metropolis of the Britiſh empire.

The firſt viſits were paid us from motives of curioſity, under the pretence of politeneſs. Our perſons, our addreſs, our characters, were examined with all the ſeverity of criticiſm, but without the candour of benevolence. The various remarks that were made, furniſhed an inexhauſtible fund of converſation for the next three months; and I have had an opportunity of procuring the literal reports of one or two of our examiners, which, as they have entertained me, I ſhall communicate for your amuſement.

In the morning, after her firſt viſit, the 'ſquire's wife ſet out to eaſe her mind of the burden of intelligence under which it laboured; which ſhe did, in every

every houſe ſhe entered, in nearly the following words:

" Well, have you ſeen the new-com-
" ers? Pray how do you like Mrs.
" Townſend? Oh! I have a charming
" little anecdote concerning her. You
" muſt know, I have learnt who ſhe was
" before ſhe was married. I thought as
" much—do you know her father was a
" cheeſemonger in Thames-ſtreet—but
" he broke, you muſt know, and ſo
" Miſs was taken from boarding-ſchool,
" and in proceſs of time arrived at the
" high dignity of upper-maid to alder-
" man Portſoken's lady. But, being
" vaſt pretty, you muſt know, and hav-
" ing had a prodigious fine education,
" Mr. Townſend the common-council-
" man fell in love with her, and married
" her. This is all fact, you may depend
" upon it; for our Sally heard it this
" very morning at the ſhop.—Can't
" ſtay; but thought I would call and let
" you know. You ſee how high ſome
" people hold up their heads, but you'll
" underſtand how to look upon 'em now.

" —I

" —I have a little hundred places to call
" at;—ſo good morning."

Miſs Prue, a maiden lady of irreproachable character, ſet off on the ſame expedition, as ſoon as ſhe had put on her morning-cap. Brimful of news, ſhe could hardly contain herſelf till ſhe got to the lawyer's braſs knocker and mahogany coloured door. No ſooner was ſhe ſeated, than out it flew.

" Well, Mrs. Leaſum, we were at
" the new-comers' laſt night; and ſuch
" a night! Why they know no more of
" cards, than if they had not been uſed
" to play above five or ſix times a week
" in their lives. As to the father and
" mother, one ſhould not expect much
" from perſons, who, I ſuppoſe, got all
" their money in Houndſditch; but really
" I pity the poor girls. They ſat mum
" half an hour; and then aſked me, Lord
" help 'em! if I had read the laſt new
" thing that came out. Pray what do you
" think?—Some people ſay the younger
" is handſome; and indeed ſhe does
" ſeem very good-natured. But as to
" beauty!

" beauty!—all I ſhall ſay is--ſhe does not " pleaſe me. To be ſure, they are both " fair enough too—their features pretty " regular, and ſome think their eyes very " fine—but, Lord! ſo aukward, ſo mo- " deſt, and yet, at the ſame time, ſo " much of the city air about them, that " they are abſolutely intolerable.—In " ſhort, I don't chuſe to ſpeak out—I " am always tender on the ſubject of " characters—but I have heard ſome- " thing—" Here ſhe concluded with a whiſper, and in a great hurry withdrew.

The next houſe ſhe called in at, was the apothecary's. The apothecary was glad of a mouthful of news for his patients. His patients ſwallowed it eagerly, and ſoon afterwards evacuated themſelves on all their viſitors, who went home, in great ſpirits, to tell their families; and thus, in the ſpace of twenty-four hours, it was ſpread over the whole pariſh.

With reſpect to myſelf, at the firſt weekly club after our arrival, the 'ſquire, the attorney, the apothecary, the malt-

ſter,

ſter, and two or three gentlemen ſots, who lived upon their means, as it is called, ſat in judgment upon my character. After much debate, in which an equal portion of candour and diſcernment was diſplayed, I was found guilty of being a cockney, of never having hunted, of never having ſhot a partridge, of keeping a poor table, and yet, at the ſame time, living above my fortune; and laſtly, of having a great deal of pride that little became me. The reſult was, that though they ſhould condeſcend to call upon me, as long as my excellent pipe of Port laſted, yet I was not to be admitted a member of their jolly ſociety.

It is true, I viſit, and am viſited; but as I really do not take much pleaſure in a drunken bout; as I am not very well ſkilled in farming or fox-hunting; and, from a tenderneſs of conſtitution, am obliged to be abſtemious in the articles of eating and drinking, we commonly have more form in our meetings than cordiality. To aſſemble together for the ſake

of

of liberal and manly converſation is held inſipid. My ſons are never at home; and my daughters, who have been taught to ſet a high value on mental accompliſhments, neither give nor receive much ſatisfaction in the company of thoſe, who think it the very ſummit of education, to have learned to dance, and play a minuet at a boarding-ſchool.

The envy, the jealouſy, and the impertinence of the lower ſort of people, is not leſs conſpicuous and troubleſome, than that of their ſuperiors. If we ſend to buy any thing, we are forced to pay ſomething more than any body elſe, becauſe we are the rich new-comers. If my cow happens to break into neighbour Hodge's field, ſhe is pounded without notice, becauſe forſooth ſhe is the Londoner's cow. If we walk down the town, all the doors and windows are flung open, and crowded with ſpectators, juſt as if my Lord Mayor's ſhow was paſſing by. My poor wife and daughter's ſilks and ſattins are criticized with unrelenting ſeverity. "It is my opinion, John," cries one, "that

" that my beſt Sunday cotton that I had " on, when I was married to thee, coſt " more money than yonder fine ſilk that " Miſs flaunts it in." " Aye," ſubjoins another, " fine feathers make fine birds " —but I wiſh ſomebody is not crook- " ed—I can perceive it for all her " pads"—and truly becauſe I don't chuſe to wear leather breeches and a little round hat, every hoſtler at the inn gates ſtands ſmiling with his arms folded, and tips his comrade the wink, to ſmoke the cockney.

Whenever my ſervants go to any ſhop, a ſet of goſſips make a point of meeting them, in order to aſk what I had for dinner, how much ſmall beer is conſumed by us in a week, and a thouſand ſimilar queſtions. No little art is made uſe of to perſuade them that I am ſtingy, and that my place is the worſt in the town; though to my certain knowledge I am ſo far impoſed upon, being a ſtranger, as that I am forced to pay a third more wages than any body elſe in the neighbourhood.

Nothing

Nothing paſſes in my houſe but it becomes matter of general converſation. If a couſin or an old acquaintance comes from London to ſpend a few days with me, no pains are ſpared to learn of the ſervants who and what he is; and if my ſervants know nothing about him, Miſs Prue takes care to ſuggeſt, that he is in ſome low trade, a mere mechanic in his beſt ſuit of cloaths. If he ſhould take an evening walk with my daughters, unaccompanied with me or my wife, He is going to be married to one of them directly. His name, his age, his origin, are immediately divulged; the fortune on both ſides aſcertained, and the day fixed.

If my wife and I happen to ſpar a little, as is uſual, among thoſe who love one another with the ſincereſt affection, a report is immediately circulated that I uſe my wife ill, or that ſhe uſes me ill, and that, notwithſtanding appearances to the contrary, we do not live happily together. I can never buy nor ſell a horſe, a cow, or a pig, nor change a ſervant, but

but I am called behind my back a fool for my pains, and it is hinted that I do not know what I am about; and indeed how ſhould I, ſince I am a cit. If I make an alteration in my garden, dig a ditch, mend a pigſtye, or thatch a hovel, my taſte, my judgment, my prudence, are called in queſtion, and it is charitably wiſhed that I do not bring my noble to ninepence, and my ninepence to nothing. If, by the careleſſneſs of my cook-maid, a joint of meat ſhould happen to be a little tainted in the dog-days, it gets wind, and it is immediately ſaid that I feed my family on ſtinking meat for cheapneſs. If a loaf ſhould be a little mouldy in damp weather, I am railed at for keeping my bread till it is ſpoiled, rather than give it a poor creature who is periſhing with hunger. In ſhort, hardly a mouſe can ſtir in any part of the houſe from the parlour to the ſcullery, but the chandlerſhop-keeper, the landlady at the alehouſe, and the mantua-maker, find means to get a knowledge

of it for the entertainment of their cuſtomers.

Till I lived in this place, I never thought myſelf of ſuch conſequence, as to merit general attention. In London, my next door neighbour neither knew nor cared what paſſed in my parlour and kitchen. I can however eaſily account for this difference. In a market town of no great opulence or extent, there are not objects enough to divert the idle. No plays, no auctions, no fine ſhops, no ſhew-glaſſes. Scarcely any amuſement for ſots, goſſips, and old maids, but thinking and talking on the affairs and families of other people. The ſettlement of a ſtranger in their town is food to them for years. They have been too long uſed to the natives to find any novelty in their concerns, and perhaps have been induced to regard them with that partiality of long acquaintance or of relationſhip, which precludes malevolence. But ſtrangers are lawful game; and the cruelty of little minds is found to take a pleaſure in detracting from their

their characters, and defeating, by falſe and malignant repreſentations, thoſe ſchemes of happineſs with which they flattered themſelves in retirement.

Sick of ſuch impertinence, and diſguſted with the ill-nature of all around me, I have reſolved to quit the market town, and have juſt hired a houſe delightfully ſituated in a diſtant village. It is the paternal habitation of a man, who, having hopes of riſing at court, chuſes to leave this charming retreat, for a ſmall dark houſe in one of the diſmal lanes that lead into the Strand. I ſhall have no near neighbours but the vicar, who is not only a learned, virtuous, religious, and benevolent, but alſo an agreeable man. His family, all of whom have that elegance of mind which reſults from a taſte for letters, will be much with mine. They have already formed a reciprocal attachment. And I hope to have found at laſt in this place, that happineſs, which I vainly ſought in a more frequented ſituation. Of this I am confident, that the honeſt ſimplicity

of the ruſtics, if it is not agreeable, is far leſs diſguſting than the pert, affected, ill-natured airs and manners of the little half bred gentry in many country towns.

The beauties of nature untouched by art, an air ſweet as it blows over the bloſſomed vale, peaceful hours, ſocial cheerfulneſs, domeſtic joys, rural dignity—theſe are mine in my village retreat. Nor do I regret the loſs of formal viſits, and that wretched intercourſe with little minds, which, while it wore away life in inſipidity, expoſed me to the envenomed ſhafts of unmerited detraction.

ESSAY V.

ON EPISTOLARY WRITERS.

WHEN a writer has diſtinguiſhed himſelf in his ſtudied performances, and pleaſed us in thoſe works, which he intended for our peruſal, we become intereſted in all that concerns him, and wiſh to be acquainted with his ideas, as they flowed, without any view to their publication, in the open communications of a private and friendly correſpondence. Beautiful minds, like beautiful bodies, appear graceful in an undreſs. The awe which they inſpire, when ſurrounded with all their dignity, is ſometimes more ſtriking than pleaſing; but we feel ourſelves relieved when admitted to their familiarity. We love to retire behind the ſcenes, and to obſerve the undiſguiſed appearance of thoſe, who

pleaſe us, when induſtriouſly decorated for public exhibition. Hence the private letters of great men have been always read with avidity.

The Greeks have not left many models in the epiſtolary ſtyle. There is no doubt but Xenophon excelled in it, though moſt of the letters which he wrote, have either not been collected or not preſerved. Thoſe of Socrates, Antiſthenes, Ariſtippus, Xenophon, Æſchines, and Philo, have never been popular. Thoſe which paſs under the name of Ariſtænetus, are of a taſte leſs reſembling the attic, than the oriental. The deſcriptions are poetically luxuriant, but the language is not pure, nor the ſtyle ſimple.

The epiſtles of Phalaris have been much read by the learned, but though they are curious monuments of the genius of the tyrant, they are not admirable ſpecimens of epiſtolary compoſition. They are more known from the violent diſpute they occaſioned between Bentley and Boyle, than from their intrinſic merit. In ſome part of that famous controverſy,

verſy, Bentley ſays, with his uſual acrimony, that Boyle had made a bad book worſe by a bad edition of it.

Cicero, the world's great model in the oratorical and the philoſophical, is no leſs eminent in the epiſtolary ſtyle. He rivalled his great patterns, the Greeks, in eloquence and philoſophy; he excelled them in his letters. His letters, indeed, were the genuine productions of his unaſſiſted genius, and have a grace peculiar to themſelves. Many of his other works are profeſſedly imitations; but conducted with that art which characteriſes genius, and appropriates all it handles. His letters were not ſtudied, they were the effuſions of the moment, they aroſe from the occaſion, and pleaſe from their air of truth and unaffected propriety. Whether buſineſs, pleaſure, politics, philoſophy, or conjugal and paternal affection, are their ſubjects, they are equally excellent, and equally pleaſing. He wrote them without the leaſt view of their coming to the public eye, and to this circumſtance they owe a great ſhare of their merit, their

freedom from affectation. Near a thouſand of them remain, and furniſh abundance of hiſtorical information, at the ſametime that they exhibit the beſt models for this ſpecies of writing. They are thought not to appear to the beſt advantage in the ſpecimens which Dr. Middleton has inſerted in his life of Cicero. No one was better able to do them juſtice, than that great biographer; but it is ſaid, he committed the taſk of tranſlation to ſome inferior writer.

There was an age when the letters of Pliny were preferred to thoſe of Cicero. They have, indeed, the glitter of an artificial poliſh, but they want the more captivating grace of natural beauty. They were ſtudied, and they wear the appearance of ſtudy. He who delights in elaborate and highly finiſhed compoſition, will be gratified in the peruſal of Pliny, but he will at the ſame time regret, if he has a taſte for propriety, that this labour was not beſtowed where it would have been better placed. In a philoſophical diſcourſe, or a formal harangue,

rangue, we expect the interpoſition of art; but in an epiſtle, we look for the effuſions of nature, rather than the efforts of ingenuity.

Seneca's Moral Eſſays have little right to the name of Epiſtles, with which he diſtinguiſhed them. They are little more than a collection of common-place obſervations, abounding in wit and ingenious turns, but wholly deſtitute of elegance and grace. His faults, indeed, are ſweet, as Quintilian ſaid; but it is a ſweetneſs which cloys, and can ſcarcely pleaſe any but a vitiated appetite.

After the Latin had ceaſed to be a living language, many excellent books of letters were written in it. It was the univerſal language of learning. The literati of different nations, the rude languages of which would not repay the labour of cultivation, wiſely choſe to communicate their thoughts in the pure dialect of the court of Auguſtus. Some of the earlieſt of theſe are diſgraced by the barbariſm of the times. But Petrarch ſhines amidſt the ſurrounding ob-

ſcurity. True genius, like his, was ſure to diſplay its luſtre, though it laboured under the diſadvantage of a prevailing corruption of taſte.

Politian had juſt pretenſions to true genius. There is a warmth and vigour in his poetry, which fully proves him to have been capable of attaining to a much higher degree of excellence, than his premature death allowed. His epiſtles are elegant, but like thoſe of Pliny, whom he imitated, they are formal and affected. They are however pleaſing to the reader, and abound with beautiful language.

Eraſmus, a name that ſhines forth with peculiar glory in the annals of literature, juſtly poſſeſſes the firſt rank among the modern epiſtolary writers. His ſtyle is not purely Ciceronian, though it diſplays many of its graces. It is entirely his own, though it often riſes to a level with claſſical excellence. He was not ſo ſcrupulouſly exact in his taſte, as to reject a barbarous and Gothic expreſſion, if it conveyed his ideas preciſely. But

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he had the ſkill to uſe it with ſuch propriety, that it acquired, in his writings, a grace and dignity. No man was better acquainted with the works of Cicero; no man, after a few prejudices, formed in his youth, were removed, entertained a higher opinion of his beauties, or knew better how to imitate them. But he deſpiſed the ſect of Ciceronians, who would ſcarcely admit a particle that was not to be found in their favourite author. He ridiculed them with admirable wit and eloquence, in his dialogue Ciceronianus; nor would he give countenance to ſo ridiculous an affectation, by any part of his writings. More ſtudious of copiouſneſs and variety of matter, than of a ſcrupulous imitation of any model, he ſelects the moſt expreſſive word he can find in the language, and, by a judicious compoſition, renders it agreeable and proper. With all their defects in point of purity of language, his letters are uncommonly entertaining; and have that ſpirit, which genius always can exhibit, but which laborious dulneſs vainly imitates.

tates. There is a fund of Lucianic humour in all his more familiar writings; in his colloquies it is moſt conſpicuous; but it is alſo very remarkable in many of his epiſtles. Had he lived in an age when polite learning was more generally encouraged and cultivated, his productions would have been models of elegance, not inferior to the boaſted reliques of antiquity. But, unfortunately, he was engaged in the unpleaſing diſputes of pedantic theologiſts; and, inſtead of treading the flowery paths of Greek and Roman literature, for which he was adapted by nature, was obliged to toil through the thorny mazes of a barbarous, perplexed, and irrational ſyſtem of divinity. His liberal mind ſoon perceived, and as ſoon avowed, the abſurdity of the received modes and opinions; but he had too great a veneration for genuine chriſtianity, to neglect thoſe ſtudies, which his profeſſion, as a chriſtian and an eccleſiaſtic, naturally led him to cultivate. He ſaw, and in great meaſure avoided, the inelegancies which abound-

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ed in the theological writings of his times; but it was not eaſy always to be upon his guard againſt them; and his mind retained a tincture of them, as waters are polluted with the impurities through which they flow.

I omit a great number of epiſtolary writers, who had little merit of their own, and who derived all their fame from a ſervile imitation of Cicero. Among theſe is Paulus Manutius, who is ſaid to have often ſpent a month in writing a ſingle letter. We ſee, indeed, in conſequence of this ſcrupulous attention, an elegant and truly Ciceronian phraſeology; but we obſerve none of the native graces of unaffected compoſition.

Our neighbours, the French, have arrogated great merit, as epiſtolary writers. Their genius and their language appear to be well adapted to excel in it. But ſome of their moſt celebrated writers have renounced the advantages which nature gave them, and have ſpoiled all the beauties of ſentiment and vivacity, by an unſeaſonable

unſeaſonable profuſion of wit. Balzac wearies his reader with the conſtant recurrence of laboured ingenuity.

Voiture abounds with beautiful thoughts expreſſed with great elegance. The language of compliment diſguſts, in other writers, by its unmeaning ſameneſs and formality. He has given it the grace of delicacy. But even he, though indiſputably a fine writer, is juſtly cenſured by Bohours, for what are called falſe thoughts. Like many others, he has neglected real beauties for artificial ornaments.

Our own countrymen have honourably diſtinguiſhed themſelves in this, as well as in every other kind of elegant compoſition. The ſtyle of Swift is thought, by many, to excel all others. It has purity, eaſe, expreſſion, and force. Pope's Letters are lively and delicate. Shenſtone's are much read; but it may be doubted whether they have that peculiar and ſtriking excellence, which ſhould place

place them among the claſſics of our country.

The late Lord Cheſterfield, though juſtly decried as a moral inſtructor, is admired as a writer of peculiar elegance. No man more cloſely and ſucceſsfully imitated the French, in every circumſtance. Like them, he writes with perſpicuity, vivacity, and that gracefulneſs which is ſure to pleaſe, and which he ſo ſtrenuouſly recommends. He is himſelf a proof of the efficacy of grace; for, with all his merit, he was certainly ſuperficial, and yet obtained a degree of fame, which more ſolid writers have ſeldom poſſeſſed.

Much has been ſaid on the epiſtolary ſtyle; as if any one ſtyle could be appropriated to the great variety of ſubjects which are treated of in letters. Eaſe, it is true, ſhould diſtinguiſh familiar letters, written on the common affairs of life; becauſe the mind is uſually at eaſe while they are compoſed. But, even in theſe, there incidentally ariſes a topic,

which requires elevated expreſſion, and an inverted conſtruction. Not to raiſe the ſtyle on theſe occaſions, is to write unnaturally; for nature teaches us to expreſs animated emotions of every kind in an animated language.

The impaſſioned lover writes unnaturally, if he writes with the eaſe of Sevigny. The dependent writes unnaturally to a ſuperior, in the ſtyle of familiarity. The ſuppliant writes unnaturally, if he rejects the figures dictated by diſtreſs. Converſation admits of every ſtyle but the poetic, and what are letters but written converſation? The great rule is, to follow nature, and to avoid an affected manner.

ESSAY VI.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

——— Quod petis hic eſt
———Animus ſi te non deficit æquus.
HOR.

AN active life is expoſed to many evils which cannot reach a ſtate of retirement; but it is found, by the uniform experience of mankind, to be, upon the whole, productive of the moſt happineſs. All men are deſirous of avoiding the liſtleſſneſs of an unemployed condition. Without the incentives of ambition, of fame, of intereſt, of emulation, men eagerly ruſh upon hazardous and painful enterpriſes. There is a quick ſucceſſion of ideas, a warm flow of ſpirits, an animated ſenſation, conſequent on exertion, which amply compenſates for the chagrin of diſappointment, and the fatigue of uninterrupted attention.

One of the moſt uſeful effects of action is, that it renders repoſe agreeable. Perpetual reſt is pain of the moſt intolerable kind. But a judicious interchange of reſt and motion, of indolent enjoyment and ſtrenuous efforts, gives a true reliſh of life; which, when too tranquil, is inſipid, and when too much agitated, diſguſtful.

This ſweet repoſe, which is neceſſary to reſtore, by relaxing the tone of the weary mind, has been ſought for by the wiſeſt and greateſt of men at their own fire-ſide. Senators and heroes have ſhut out the acclamations of an applauding world, to enjoy the prattling of their little ones, and to partake the endearments of family converſation. They knew that even their beſt friends, in the common intercourſe of life, were in ſome degree actuated by intereſted motives in diſplaying their affection; that many of their followers applauded them in hopes of reward; and that the giddy multitude, however zealous, were not always judicious in their approbation.

But

But the attentions paid them at their fire-ſide, the ſmiles which exhilarated their own table, were the genuine reſult of undiſſembled love.

The nurſery has often alleviated the fatigues of the bar and the ſenate houſe. Nothing contributes more to raiſe the gently pleaſing emotions, than the view of infant innocence, enjoying the raptures of a game at play. All the ſentiments of uncontrolled nature diſplay themſelves to the view, and furniſh matter for agreeable reflection to the mind of the philoſophical obſerver. To partake with children in their little pleaſures, is by no means unmanly. It is one of the pureſt ſources of mirth. It has an influence in amending the heart, which neceſſarily takes a tincture from the company that ſurrounds us. Innocence as well as guilt is communicated and increaſed by the contagion of example. And the great author of evangelical philoſophy has taught us to emulate the ſimplicity of the infantine age. He ſeems indeed himſelf to have been

delighted with their preſence, and found in them what he in vain ſought among thoſe who judged themſelves their ſuperiors, unpolluted purity of heart.

Among the great variety of pictures which the vivid imagination of Homer has diſplayed throughout the Iliad, there is not one more pleaſing than the family-piece which repreſents the parting interview between Hector and Andromache. The heart is intereſted as well as the imagination delighted. The hero ceaſes to be terrible, that he may become amiable. We admire him while he ſtands completely armed in the field of battle, but we love him more while he is taking off his helmet, that he may not frighten his little boy with its nodding plumes. We are refreſhed with the tender ſcene of domeſtic love, while all around breathes rage and diſcord. We are pleaſed to ſee the arm which is ſhortly to deal death and deſtruction among a hoſt of foes, employed in careſſing an infant ſon with the embraces of paternal love. A profeſſed critic

critic would attribute the pleaſing effect entirely to contraſt, but the heart has declared, previouſly to the inquiries of criticiſm, that it is chiefly derived from that ſatisfaction which we naturally take in beholding great characters engaged in tender and amiable employments.

But after all that is ſaid of the purity and the ſolidity of domeſtic pleaſures, they unfortunately appear to a great part of mankind, inſipid, unmanly, and capable of ſatisfying none but the weak, the ſpiritleſs, the inexperienced, and the effeminate. The pretenders to wit and modern philoſophy are often found to renounce the received opinions of prudential conduct; and while they affect a ſuperior liberality, to regulate their lives by the moſt ſelfiſh principles. Whatever appears to have little tendency to promote perſonal pleaſure and advantage, they leave to be performed by thoſe ſimple individuals, who are dull enough to purſue the journey of life by the ſtraight road of common ſenſe. It is true, they will allow, the world

muſt be repleniſhed by a perpetual ſucceſſion; and it is no leſs true, that an offspring once introduced into the world, requires all the care of painful attention. But let the taſk be reſerved for meaner ſpirits. If the paſſions can be gratified without the painful conſequences, they eagerly ſeize the indulgence. But the toil of education they leave to thoſe who are fools enough to take a pleaſure in it. There will always be a ſufficient number whoſe folly will lead them, for the ſake of indulging their paſſions, to engage in a life of perpetual anxiety. The fool's paradiſe will never be deſerted.

Preſumptuous as are theſe pretenders to a newly invented ſyſtem of philoſophy, it is not to be ſuppoſed they will think themſelves ſuperior to Cicero. Yet Cicero, with all his liberality of mind, felt the tenderneſs of conjugal and paternal attachment, and acknowledged that, at one time, he received no ſatisfaction in any company but that of his wife, his little daughter, and, to uſe his own epithet,

epithet, his HONIED young Cicero*. The great Sir Thomas More, whom nobody will ſuſpect of narrowneſs of mind, who by a very ſingular treatiſe evinced that he was capable of thinking and of chuſing for himſelf, has left it on record, that he devoted a great ſhare of his time, from the united motives of duty and delight, to the amuſement of his children.

It will be objected by thoſe who pretend to have formed their ideas of life from actual obſervation, that domeſtic happineſs, however pleaſing in deſcription, like many a poetic dream, is but an alluring picture, deſigned by a good heart, and painted in glowing colours by a lively fancy. The conſtant company, ſay they, even of thoſe we love, occaſions an inſipidity. Inſipidity grows into diſguſt. Diſguſt, long continued, ſours the temper. Peeviſhneſs is the natural conſequence. The domeſtic circle becomes the ſcene of diſpute. Mutual antipathy

* Ut tantum requietis habeam quantum cum uxore et filiolâ et MELLITO Cicerone conſumitur.

is ingenious in deviſing mutual torment. Sullen ſilence or malignant remarks fill up every hour, till the arrival of a ſtranger cauſes a temporary reſtraint, and excites that good humour which ought to be diſplayed among thoſe whom the bonds of affection and of blood have already united.

Experience, indeed, proves that theſe remarks are ſometimes verified. But that there is much domeſtic miſery, is no argument that there is no domeſtic happineſs.

Natural ſtupidity, natural ill-temper, acquired ill-habits, want of education, illiberal manners, and a neglect of the common rules of diſcretion, will render every condition diſagreeable. When thoſe are united by connubial ties, who were ſeparated by natural and inherent diverſity, no wonder if that degree of happineſs which can only reſult from a proper union is unknown. In the forced alliance, which the poet of Venuſium mentions, of the ſerpent with the dove, of the tyger with the lamb, there can be

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no love. When we expatiate on the happineſs of the domeſtic groupe, we preſuppoſe that all who compoſe it are originally aſſimilated by affection, and are ſtill kept in union by diſcreet friendſhip. Where this is not the caſe, the cenſure muſt fall on the diſcordant diſpoſition of the parties, and not on the eſſential nature of domeſtic intercourſe.

To form, under the direction of prudence, an early conjugal attachment, is one of the beſt ſecurities of virtue. The duties called forth by the relations of huſband and father, are of that tender kind which inſpires goodneſs and humanity. He who beholds an helpleſs infant looking up to him for ſupport, will not eaſily be induced to indulge in unbecoming extravagance, or devote himſelf to indolence. He who has a riſing family to introduce into a vicious world, will be cautious of ſetting a bad example, the contagion of which, when it proceeds from parental authority, muſt be irreſiſtibly malignant. Thus many who in their individual and unconnected ſtate,

would

would probably have ſpent a life not only uſeleſs to others, but profligate and careleſs in itſelf, have become valuable members of the community, and have arrived at a degree of moral improvement to which they would not otherwiſe have attained.

The contempt in which domeſtic pleaſures have in modern times been held, is a mark of profligacy. It is alſo a proof of a prevailing ignorance of real enjoyment. It argues a defect in taſte and judgment, as well as in morals. For the general voice of the experienced has in paſt ages declared, that the trueſt happineſs is to be found at home.

ESSAY VII.

ON THE MERITS OF COWLEY AS A POET.

THE biographers of our Engliſh authors have ſometimes fallen into a miſtake, which renders the truth of their ſtory ſuſpected. Their accounts are truly panegyrics. The hero of their tales, like the lover in the romance, is adorned with every good quality. Not content to relate facts with impartiality, they extenuate what is culpable, and exaggerate all that can admit of commendation. In truth, they who have exhibited the lives of our authors, have uſually been the editors of their works; and either from a real and natural fondneſs for thoſe things on which they have beſtowed care,

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or from the leſs laudable motive of promoting the circulation of a book in which they were intereſted, have ſpoken too highly even of thoſe who merit moderate applauſe. But it is not wonderful if the trader repreſents his own merchandize as the beſt in the market-place.

It was the lot of Cowley to be handed down to poſterity by a writer who was famous in his day for eloquence. Dr. Sprat probably undertook the office of a biographer, with a deſign to diſplay his talents in a ſpecies of oratory which the Roman rhetoricians called the demonſtrative. He diſcharged it well as an artiſt, but failed as an accurate hiſtorian. By placing Cowley in the firſt rank of poets, he has in effect degraded him from the ſubaltern ſtation which he had elſe preſerved unmoleſted. Dr. Sprat owed much of his own fame to the poet who had compared his ſtyle to the gentle and majeſtic current of the Thames; and returned the compliment, perhaps from other motives than thoſe of gratitude; for the higher Cowley was exalted, the greater honour

was

was reflected on thoſe whom he had commended. Of this celebrated Biſhop of Rocheſter, Lord Orrery has ſaid, few men have gained a greater character for elegance and correctneſs, and few men have deſerved it leſs. And of the poet whom he praiſed, the great Dryden has with diffidence remarked, that ſomewhat of the purity of Engliſh, ſomewhat of more equal thoughts, ſomewhat of ſweetneſs in the numbers, in one word, ſomewhat of a finer turn and more lyrical verſe, is yet wanting.

Whatever are his defects, no poet has been more liberally praiſed. Lord Clarendon has ſaid, he made a flight above all men; Addiſon, in his account of the Engliſh Poets, that he improved upon the Theban bard; the Duke of Buckingham upon his Tombſtone, that he was the Engliſh Pindar, the Horace, the Virgil, the Delight, the Glory, of his Times. And with reſpect to the harſhneſs of his numbers, the eloquent Sprat tells us, that if his verſes in ſome places ſeem not as ſoft and flowing as one would have

have them, it was his choice, and not his fault.

Such is the applauſe laviſhed on a writer who is now ſeldom read. That he could ever be eſteemed as a pindaric poet, is a curious literary phænomenon. He totally miſtook his own genius, when he thought of imitating Pindar. He totally miſtook the genius of Pindar, when he thought his own incoherent ſentiments and numbers bore the leaſt reſemblance to the wild, yet regular ſublimity of the Theban. He neglected even thoſe forms, the ſtrophe, the antiſtrophe, and the epode, which even imitative dulneſs can copy. Sublime imagery, vehement pathos, poetic fire, which conſtitute the eſſence of the pindaric ode, are incompatible with witty conceits, accurate antitheſes, and vulgar expreſſion. All theſe imply the coolneſs of deliberate compoſition, or the meanneſs of a little mind; both of them moſt repugnant to the truly pindaric ode, in which all is rapturous and noble. Wit of any kind would be improperly diſ-

played in ſuch compoſition; but to increaſe the abſurdity, the wit of Cowley is often falſe.

If the end of poetry is to pleaſe, harmony of verſe is eſſential to poetry, for, without it, poetry cannot pleaſe. It is not poſſible, that any whoſe ear has been attuned to the melody of good compoſition, ſhould read a ſingle ode of Cowley without being ſhocked with diſcord *. There is often nothing left but the jingle at the end, to diſtinguiſh poems renowned for their ſublimity, from the baldeſt proſe. Such poetry may juſtly incur the ridiculous title of proſe run mad.

Yet is there ſometimes interwoven a purple patch, as Horace calls it; a fine expreſſion, a truly poetical thought, an harmonious couplet; but it occurs not often enough to repay the reader for the toilſome taſk of wading through a tedious aſſemblage of diſproportioned and diſ-

* Dr. Hurd ſays, that Cowley had an ear for harmony, but that he formed himſelf on the model of Donne and Jonſon, who affected a rugged and uncouth ſtyle.

cordant

cordant ſtanzas. Of ſuch conſiſt his Pindarics; which, though they procured him the greateſt ſhare of his reputation, deſerved it leaſt. Many of his other poems, if we conſider the rude ſtate of verſification, and the bad taſte of the times, have great merit; and had he made Tibullus his model, inſtead of Pindar, his claim to the firſt rank of poets had not been called in queſtion. The tenderneſs of love, and the ſoft language of complaint, were adapted to his genius. But he choſe to tread in the footſteps of Alcæus *, as he ſays himſelf, who, according to the Halicarnaſſian, combined the μεγαλοφυες και ηδυ, or adopted the grand, as well as the ſweet.

That he had a taſte for Latin poetry, and wrote in it with elegance, the well-known Epitaph on himſelf, upon his re-

* Alcæus alſo ſometimes miſtook his genius; for Quintilian ſays of him, "In eloquendo brevis et "magnificus, plurimumque Homero ſimilis; ſed "in luſus et amores deſcendit, majoribus tamen "aptior."

tirement,

tirement, is a full proof. But, ſurely, his rhetorical biographer makes uſe of the figure hyperbole, when he affirms that Cowley has excelled the Romans themſelves. He was inferior to many a writer of leſs fame in the Muſæ Anglicanæ. But ſtill he had great merit; and I muſt confeſs I have read his Latin verſes with more pleaſure, than any of his Engliſh can afford.

But, after all the honours that have been accumulated on his name as a poet, his great merit conſiſted in his proſaic compoſition. In this department he is an elegant, a pleaſing, a judicious writer. His love of retirement and contemplation qualified him for a moraliſt; and it is much to be lamented, that he did not devote a greater part of his time to a kind of writing which appeared natural to him, and in which he excelled. The language of his heart ſhines forth in the little he has left us, and we cannot but love it.

Much more of that language would have deſcended to poſterity, if his friends,

from a miſtaken opinion of propriety, had not ſuppreſſed his private letters. Dr. Sprat and Mr. Clifford were avowedly poſſeſſed of many; and the very reaſon aſſigned by the biographer, for their ſuppreſſion, ſhould have operated in their publication. The letters that paſs between particular friends, ſays he, if they are written as they ought to be, that is, I ſuppoſe, in an artleſs manner, can ſcarcely ever be fit to ſee the light. How great an injury would polite learning have ſuſtained, if the friends of Cicero had thought like Sprat and Clifford?

They would better have conſulted the reputation of the poet, had they pronounced the Pindarics unfit to ſee the light. Editors, in general, would act more honourably, in exhibiting only the beſt of their author's productions, than in praiſing, as well as publiſhing, all that has fallen from his pen. But, in truth, to have left out any part of his poems, would, in that age, have been an unpar-

donable omiſſion; for who ſhould dare to mutilate a Pindar?

Time, the great arbiter of reputation, has already begun to ſtrip the poet of his borrowed honours. A critic, whoſe genius and judgment keep pace with each other, and who illuminates every ſubject on which he treats, has allotted Cowley his juſt ſpecies of praiſe, and has given the world, in a judicious ſelection of his works, all that they poſſeſſed of real value.

Of theſe the proſe forms a principal part. It is written in a ſtyle ſufficiently flowing to prove that Cowley was not deſtitute of a muſical ear; a circumſtance which countenances the opinion of thoſe who maintain that he affected a rugged ſtyle. Was it a compliance with the taſte of the age, that induced him to affect deformity? Unfortunate compliance with a deplorable taſte. He, as well as they whom he imitated, Donne and Jonſon, were unqueſtionably poſſeſſed of great learning and ingenuity; but

they all neglected the graces of compoſition, and will, therefore, ſoon be numbered among thoſe once celebrated writers, whoſe utility now conſiſts in filling a vacant place on the upper ſhelf of a deſerted library.

ESSAY VIII.

LETTERS THE SOURCE OF CONSOLATION.

Sunt lachrymæ rerum. VIRG.

Sunt verba et voces quibus hunc lenire dolorem
Poſſis. HOR.

THERE is a great part of mankind, who, without the conſolations of philoſophy or religion, and without any ſuperior ſtrength of mind, ſtand up againſt the evils of life with firmneſs, and even laugh at thoſe who lament them. Mirth and jollity are able to diſſipate the ſenſe of thoſe evils which really exiſt; but theſe, alas! preſuppoſe health and plenty, which never yet fell without viciſſitude to the lot of any human being.

Pliny the elder has introduced his Natural Hiſtory of Man, with a very ingenious and pathetic deſcription of the

peculiar evils to which he is born. "Man, ſays he, "pays dearly, for the noble privileges he enjoys. Nature, a kind parent to other animals, has treated Man with the ſeverity of a ſtep-mother. To her other productions ſhe has given the coverings of ſhells, barks, ſkins, hair, feathers, ſcales, and fleeces. Man ſhe throws naked into the wide world, and bitterly bewailing his arrival in it. The poor lord of the creation lies bound hand and foot, and weeps, and ſuffers puniſhment, which he cannot in his own perſon have deſerved. Other animals diſcover, by the ſuggeſtions of inſtinct, their diſtinguiſhing excellence; and know, without inſtruction, how to diſplay it. Man can do nothing without being taught, and all that Nature has led him to ſpontaneouſly, is to weep. He alone is acquainted with grief; he alone is a ſlave to luxury, to ambition, to avarice, to the fear of death, to ſuperſtition. He alone is ſolicitous about his burial and a future ſtate. The life of no animal is more precarious, no animal is ſubject to more

more diſeaſes, in no animal is fear more predominant, or madneſs more outrageous. In a word, other animals injure not their own ſpecies; the ſavage lion ſpares his fellow, the ſerpent bites not the ſerpent; but moſt of the evils which fall to the lot of Man are derived to him from his fellow-creature."

Thus writes Pliny; yet to be called into exiſtence, to be furniſhed with ſenſes capable of pleaſure from every object that ſurrounds us, to be poſſeſſed of a mind that delights in contemplation, is ſo glorious a diſtinction, ſo exalted a ſtate, compared with that of the inanimate clod, that one would be almoſt tempted to think the creature who enjoys it, muſt ſpend every hour of its duration in joy and gratitude for the benefit. But the ſacred writers, the heathen philoſophers, all who have either thought or written with ſolidity, have agreed that Man is born to trouble, and that few and evil are his days. The moral poet Euripides has ſaid, that, to be a Man is a ſufficient plea for being miſerable.

Clear as is this truth from the uniform repreſentations of writers, and from the perſonal experience of every individual that has made any progreſs in the journey of life, yet if we take a view of the thoughtleſs votaries of jollity, we ſhall find every eye ſparkling with joy; and from the careleſs eaſe diſplayed in every part of their behaviour, ſhall almoſt be tempted to attribute the melancholy deſcription of things, to the miſtakes of thoſe who ſee through the deceitful medium of deſpondency. Warm with the ebullition of the animal ſpirits, and agitated by a perpetual round of amuſements, they are ſtrangers to thoſe ſlighter evils which ſo ſenſibly affect the delicate, and they give but a momentary attention to real calamity. So paſs a few years of pleaſing faſcination. It is a kind of ominous calm, and preſages a tempeſt. The loſs of youth, of health, of aſſociates, of faſhion, of influence, converts the boon companion, the faſhionable toaſt, the man of wit and humour,

to

to a religious devotee, or a melancholy miſanthrope.

But, in truth, the kind hand of Providence has ſcattered flowers as well as thorns in the road of life; and the great ſkill required, is to ſelect thoſe that are perennial, thoſe that do not bud, blow, and wither in a day, from thoſe that ſhine with tranſient luſtre, or conceal poiſonous qualities under a vivid foliage.

Among the many arguments for a claſſical and comprehenſive education, there is not one that ought to have greater weight, than that it enables thoſe who enjoy the benefit of it, to derive the pureſt, the ſweeteſt, the moſt elegant, and the leaſt injurious pleaſures from every object that ſurrounds them. The man of taſte and learning creates, as it were, a little world of his own, in which he exerciſes his faculties; and he feels his moſt exalted ſatisfactions ariſing from things, the exiſtence of which is unknown to the vulgar mind. The Plebeian ſends his ſon to the grammar-ſchool; but he ſets but a ſmall value on what he learns there, becauſe

becauſe it has little connection with the arts of gaining or of keeping money; and it is true, that he may receive more advantage from the inſtructions of the writing-maſter and the arithmetician. A taſte for elegance without a competency is a real misfortune.

But ſurely, the parent in the middle ranks of life, who is able to place his ſon above dependence, contributes more to his real happineſs, when he gives him a taſte for the claſſics, and for ſtudies which will exalt his nature; than when, by making him a vender of ribbons, he affords him an opportunity of hereafter ſhining in the envied, but mean magnificence of a lord mayor. To poſſeſs thouſands with the narrow ſpirit of a ſtock-jobber, can add but little real happineſs. But to poſſeſs a taſte for Virgil, with only the neceſſary comforts and conveniences of life, will confer an elegance and dignity of mind; and will cauſe a finer pleaſure, than was ever felt by a Craſſus, or a Clive.

Where, indeed, ſhall we find objects capable of attaching the mind in every ſtage of

of life, in every condition, in every time, in every place, but in the walks of literature? Theſe ſtudies, ſays Cicero, in a paſſage which can never be too often repeated, afford nouriſhment to our youth, delight our old age, adorn proſperity, ſupply a refuge in adverſity, are a conſtant ſource of pleaſure at home, are no impediment while abroad, attend us in the night-ſeaſon, and accompany us in our travels and retirements. The great ſtateſman ſpoke the dictates of his own experience. To his hours of dejection we owe many of his fineſt philoſophical treatiſes, in the compoſition of which he awhile forgot his own and his country's calamity.

Deep ſorrow is known to ſeek ſolitude for indulgence. Company may diſſipate the lighter cares, but it appears like mockery to real woe. Add to this, that to mix with company while under the influence of grief, unleſs it is the company of familiar friends, is a violation of the rules of propriety, ſince it tends to throw a damp on that cheerfulneſs, to promote which ſociety is ſought for. But

ſolitude

ſolitude invites to reading; and amid the great variety of books, ſome one may always be found in uniſon with our own temper. In the retirements of our library, no inſolent intruder can upbraid us for diſinclination or incapacity to taſte convivial enjoyment.

When the proſpects which preſent themſelves in the common road of life are dark and dreary, the man of taſte can ſtep aſide into the elyſium of poeſy, and tread the flowery paths and view the gilded ſcenes which fancy raiſes with the magic enchantment. The ingenious biographer of the poet Gray has informed us, that the moſt approved productions of his friend were brought forth ſoon after the death of one whom the poet loved. Sorrow led him to ſeek for ſolace of the muſe. That the muſe ſmiled on her votary, every reader of taſte has already acknowledged. Sacred hiſtory has acquainted us with the power of muſic over the paſſions, and there is little doubt but the verſe as well as the lyre of David, can ſooth the troubled ſpirits to repoſe.

It

It is difficult to be attached to the common objects of human purſuit, without feeling the ſordid or the troubleſome paſſions. In the purſuits of learning, all is liberal, noble, generous. They require and promote that comprehenſive mode of thinking which overlooks the little and mean occupations of the vulgar mind. To the man of philoſophical obſervation the world appears as a theatre, in which the buſy actors toil, and weary themſelves, for his amuſement. He ſees the emptineſs of the objects; he is acquainted with the falſe glitter that ſurrounds him; he knows how ſhort and unſubſtantial are the good and evil that excite all the ardour of purſuit and abhorrence; andcan therefore derive a degree of delight from reflection to which they who are deeply, and even ſucceſsfully intereſted in them, can never attain. The ſordid life and coarſe manners of Diogenes were as little laudable as amiable, yet is it probable that his happineſs was more conſtant than that of the turbulent Alexander. Notwithſtanding the charms of opulence, yet have Socrates

and

and Epictetus attracted more admirers than the richeſt publican of Athens and Rome.

It is true, that learning in all its ramifications ſhould be reſpectively purſued as a qualification for the ſeveral profeſſions of civil life; but excluding the motives of intereſt and ambition, it is to be cultivated for its own ſake, by thoſe who underſtand and wiſh to enjoy, under every circumſtance, the utmoſt attainable happineſs. Next to religion, it is the beſt and ſweeteſt ſource of comfort in thoſe hours of dejection, which every mortal muſt ſometimes experience. It conſtitutes one of the moſt ſolid pillars to ſupport the tottering fabric of human felicity, and commonly contributes as much to virtue as to happineſs.

ESSAY IX.

ON ORIENTAL POETRY; PARTICULARLY THAT OF ISAIAH.

THE productions of the mind, like thoſe of the earth, are found to have different degrees of vigour and beauty in different climates. In the more northern regions, where the nerves are braced by cold, thoſe works are the commoneſt, and attain to the greateſt perfection, which proceed from the exertion of the rational powers, and the painful efforts of the judgment. The ſciences, like the hardy pine, flouriſh on the bleakeſt mountains; while the works of taſte and fancy ſeem to ſhrink from the rude blaſt, with all the tenderneſs of the ſenſitive-plant, and to require the genial warmth of a nearer ſun to give them their full luxuriance and maturity. Ariſtotle, Newton, and Locke, were

were the natives and inhabitants of temperate regions. Experience ſeems to prove, that all the mental powers exiſt in their greateſt degree of ſtrength and perfection among thoſe who inhabit that part of the globe which lies between the tropic of Cancer and the Arctic circle. No complete and celebrated work of genius was ever produced in the torrid zone. But this circumſtance muſt not lead to a concluſion that the inhabitants of the temperate zone excel all others in thoſe faculties which we call imaginative, as well as thoſe which are properly diſtinguiſhed by the name of intellective. The few ſpecimens extant of works produced in the eaſtern and ſouthern climates are remarkable for vigour of fancy, and tend to confirm the opinion, that the warmer regions are favourable to poetical genius, and the colder to the efforts of reaſon.

But whether the diverſity of genius in countries nearer or more remote from the ſun proceeds from natural cauſes, or from the adventitious circumſtances of different

different modes of education, different views, and a different ſpirit of emulation, it is certain that the productions of Eaſtern and Northern genius are diſſimilar. Some ingenious critics have indeed pointed out a reſemblance between the Gothic and Oriental poetry, in the wild enthuſiaſm of an irregular imagination. And they have accounted for it, by ſuppoſing, with great probability, that in the famous emigration of the Aſiatics into Scandinavia, they brought with them their national ſpirit of poetry, and communicated it to the tribes with whom they united. The reſemblance therefore in works produced ſince this union, does not prove that the Northern and Oriental genius were originally alike. Thoſe productions of either which are allowed to be original, and to bear no marks of imitation have perhaps no other reſemblance than that which commonly proceeds from the ſimilar operation of the ſame faculties of the human mind.

It ſeems, indeed, that a cauſe may be aſſigned for this diverſity, without attri-

buting it to an eſſential difference in the conſtitution of the mental faculties. The imagination is ſtrongly affected by ſurrounding objects, and acquires vigour by frequent exerciſe. He who is placed in a climate where the ſerenity of the weather conſtantly preſents him with blue ſkies, luxuriant plantations, and ſunny proſpects, will find his imagination the ſtrongeſt of his faculties; and in the expreſſion of his ſentiments, will abound in alluſions to natural objects, in ſimilies, and in the moſt lively metaphors. His imagination will be his diſtinguiſhing excellence, becauſe it will be more exerciſed than any other of his faculties; and all the powers both of body and mind are known to acquire vigour by habitual exertion. He, on the other hand, whoſe lot it is to exiſt in a leſs favoured part of the globe, who is driven by the inclemency of his climate to warm roofs, and inſtead of baſking in the ſunſhine amidſt all the combined beauties of nature, flies for refuge from the cold to the blazing

hearth of a ſmoky cottage, will ſeek in the exerciſe of his reaſon, thoſe reſources which he cannot find in the actual employment of his imagination. Good ſenſe and juſt reaſoning will therefore predominate in his productions. Even in the wildeſt of his flights, a methodical plan, the reſult of thought and reflection, will appear, on examination, to reſtrain the irregularities of licentious fancy.

Conſiſtently with this theory we find Oriental poetry exhibiting the moſt pictureſque ſcenes of nature, and illuſtrating every moral ſentiment or argumentative aſſertion by ſimilies, not indeed exact in the reſemblance, but ſufficiently analogous to ſtrike and gratify the imagination. Strong imagery, animated ſentiment, warmth and vivacity of expreſſion, all of which are the effects of a lively fancy, are its conſtant characteriſtics. The accuracy of logic, and the ſubtlety of metaphyſics, are of a nature too frigid to influence the Oriental writer. He feels not the beauty

of demonſtration, he purſues not a chain of argument, and he ſubmits to the force of perſuaſion, rather from the dictates of his feelings, than from rational conviction. He endeavours to influence his reader in the ſame manner, and commonly excites an emotion ſo violent, as to produce a more powerful effect, than would be experienced even from concluſive argumentation.

The Sibylline oracles owed their ſolemn air, their credit, and their power over the fancy, to the dark and difficult ſtyle in which they were compoſed. Virgil's Pollio, ſuppoſed to have been written from a hint taken from the books of the Sibyls, is the moſt admired of his Eclogues; and a great ſhare of the pleaſure derived from the peruſal of it, is juſtly attributed to the judgment of the poet, in leaving more to be underſtood than meets the ear. The forebodings of Caſſandra were not attended to by the Trojans; and perhaps the true reaſon was, that they were not underſtood. The witches in Macbeth add to the terrible

ſolemnity

ſolemnity of prophetical incantation, by its darkneſs and uncertainty.

Obſcurity ſeems to have been the characteriſtic of all writings pretending to prediction. It certainly increaſed their poetical merit, though, among the Greeks and Romans, it was probably no more than a ſtudied artifice to evade, if the event did not correſpond to the prophecy, the imputation of impoſture. Thus were the oracles of Apollo delivered in ambiguous phraſes which frequently admitted a contrary, always a doubtful, interpretation.

Without this artful proceeding, their authority had not been ſo long maintained. Frequent failure, without any ſubterfuge to preſerve the prophetical power unſuſpected, would ſoon have ſilenced the Delphic prieſteſs. But while the ænigmatical prediction preſerved the dignity of the oracle, by inſpiring awe, it contributed to its ſecurity by facilitating evaſion.

The Sacred Prophecies have that obſcurity which diſtinguiſhes this ſpecies

of writing. The final cauſe of it, however, was to exerciſe the faith and ſagacity of mankind. The beauty which it adds to the poetry, cannot be ſuppoſed to ariſe from deſign or ſkill in poetry as an art, but is the incidental reſult of natural propriety. And none but the unbeliever will ſuppoſe that, like the oracles of Delphos, they admitted a doubtful, in order to admit a double conſtruction.

The prophecy of Iſaiah abounds in the beauties of Oriental poetry. The tranſlation is a literal one, and though it may be found inaccurate by a Lowth or a Kennicot, will, I believe, hardly admit of improvement in force, ſimplicity, and animation. It does honour to the feelings of the tranſlators, who, though they have performed their taſk with ſo much ſpirit, had nothing elſe in view but fidelity. To refinement and taſte they made no pretenſions; and that their work is ſo well executed, muſt have been owing to the excellence of their natural ſentiment. We have ſeveral literal

tranſlations

tranſlations of the ancient poets into Engliſh proſe, which are in requeſt among ſchool-boys. In theſe we find no remains of that beauty which has been celebrated from age to age from its firſt production. Few of theſe are rendered ſo faithfully, word for word, from their originals, as the Scriptures; which, notwithſtanding this diſadvantage, are the ſublimeſt and moſt intereſting books in the Engliſh language.

That they are thus excellent, it may indeed be ſaid, is not to be wondered at. They proceeded from that real inſpiration, to which the celebrated writers of antiquity only pretended. And if the enthuſiaſm, which the imaginary aſſiſtance of a fabulous deity excited, could diffuſe that captivating ſpirit over the works of a mortal poet which has charmed every ſucceeding age, it will be an obvious inference, that the genuine afflatus of the great Author of the univerſe muſt produce a work of eminent and unqueſtionable beauty. Such reaſoning is plauſible; but, in the preſent caſe, it

may not be improper to obſerve, that the divine inſpiration operated intentionally no farther than in dictating truth of repreſentation, and in laying open ſcenes of futurity; and that the beauties diſcoverable in the medium of compoſition, by which thoſe primary ends are accompliſhed, are but collateral and ſubordinate effects. Conſidered as ſuch, every man of ſentiment feels them of a ſuperior kind, and if he judges by the criterion of his undiſſembled feelings, muſt acknowledge that though they are ſometimes reſembled in Homer, they are ſeldom equalled, and never excelled. Conſider the poetical beauties merely as the productions of Iſaiah, a very ancient poet of Judea, and his writings will ſurely claim the attention of a man of letters, as much as thoſe of the native of Smyrna or of Aſcra.

Thoſe who pretend to an exemption from prejudice, evince the futility of their pretenſions, when they attribute the general admiration of the Scriptures, as compoſitions, to opinions formed in their favour

favour in the early period of infancy. The truth is, the prejudices which they have unreaſonably adopted, againſt the doctrines derived from thoſe ancient books, extend themſelves to the ſtyle and ſentiment. But, ſurely, excluſive of the religious tendency, and of the arguments for the authenticity of the books, they claim a great degree of veneration from their antiquity, and juſtly excite the attention of criticiſm, as curious ſpecimens of Oriental compoſition.

It might, indeed, have been expected, from the general taſte, which at preſent prevails for the remains of ancient Engliſh poetry, that thoſe works, which juſtly boaſt a higher antiquity than any of the productions of North or South Britain, would have been particularly regarded. But, while the ballad of a minſtrel, beautiful, perhaps, and well worth preſerving, has been recovered from its duſt, and committed to memory; the family Bible has been ſuffered to lie unopened, or has been peruſed, by many, only with a view to painful improvement,

without

without an idea of the poſſibility of deriving from it the elegant pleaſures of literary entertainment.

This, however, is, in theſe times, only true of thoſe, whoſe deficient or ill-conducted education has not improved the principles of taſte, which nature has indeed, in ſome degree, conferred on all, but which commonly lie for ever dormant, or operate perverſely, unleſs excited by favourable opportunities, and directed by judicious diſcipline. The learned reader has been lately taught to peruſe the Sacred Books as claſſics, which, without the affectation of art, diſplay ſuch beauties as art can but faintly imitate.

Yet even the vulgar often feel the full effect of beauties, which they know not to point out; and are affected with a very ſtrong ſenſe of pleaſure, while they are reading the Scriptures ſolely from motives of duty, and a deſire of edification. In truth, among thoſe whoſe natural taſte is not corrupted by falſe refinement, which perhaps is the moſt numerous, though not the moſt diſtinguiſhed part of the community,

munity, the Bible is read as affording all the delight of pleaſing poetry and hiſtory; and it may, therefore, juſtly be ſaid to be the moſt popular book in the Engliſh language.

But the obvious perception of its excellence, among thoſe who are actuated only by the ſentiments of nature, while it ſtrongly confirms theſe remarks, may be thought to ſuperſede their neceſſity. To this it may be anſwered, that though it is true, that the more ſtriking excellencies are obvious to every one, yet the more refined and delicate may remain to be pointed out by him, who profeſſedly enters on a critical diſquiſition of the ſubject. And they who fully feel and acknowledge the admirable touches of nature and ſimplicity, which are obſervable in every page of thoſe writings, will, perhaps, receive additional ſatisfaction, when they find their taſte conformable to claſſical ideas of literary excellence.

There is, in the preſent age, a very numerous tribe of readers, who have formed their taſte and ſentiments from the wri-

tings

tings of the philoſophers of Geneva, and from the ſceptical ſophiſtry of our own countrymen. They are known to make pretenſions to a very uncommon degree of refinement, in their judgment of compoſition; and to condemn every work, whatever marks it may bear of a ſtrong, though uncultivated genius, which wants the laſt poliſh of delicacy and correctneſs, and has nothing ſimilar to thoſe modern productions, with which alone they have been converſant. With all their boaſted comprehenſion of mind, they ſeem to want ideas, which may operate as principles in forming a juſt opinion of thoſe works, which were compoſed before the invention of ſyſtematic rules, and before native ſentiment was ſuperſeded by the feeble, though elegant, feelings, introduced in a very advanced ſtate of civilization. Under theſe unfavourable prepoſſeſſions, the Bible appears to them as an aſſemblage of groſſneſs and vulgariſms; which, therefore, without determining upon the authenticity of it, they avoid reading; apprehending that they

they can derive no pleaſure from it, and that they may corrupt their ſtyle, and catch inelegance.

With theſe it would be a valuable point gained, for their own ſakes as well as for ſociety, if they could be prevailed on ſo far to lay aſide their prejudices, as to open the book, and judge of it from what they feel and remark on a fair examination. If they could once be induced to read it with avidity, from an expectation of literary amuſement, they could ſcarcely fail of receiving, at the ſame time, a more important benefit.

In an age like the preſent, when all orders are, in ſome degree, addicted to letters, he certainly renders great ſervice to religion, and conſequently to ſociety, who unites taſte with theology, and excites the attention of the careleſs and ſceptical to thoſe books, of which a ſenſe of duty enjoins the peruſal, by ſetting their beauties in a new, or a ſtronger light.

And that this opinion of the peculiar beauties of Iſaiah is not ſingular, if it is neceſ-

neceſſary to appeal to any other proof than the common feelings of mankind, is evident from the judgment of a popular writer of our own, who, as he was indiſputably a poet himſelf, will be allowed, by the moſt rigid critics, to be a competent judge of poetry. Mr. Pope's Meſſiah is one of the beſt known and moſt eſteemed of his ſhorter works; but that it derived its chief merit from Iſaiah there can be no doubt, and the amiable poet felt a pleaſure to acknowledge. Unlike the modern pretenders to wit, a friend to religion as well as virtue, he neglected not the opportunity which this paſtoral afforded, to form a compariſon between Iſaiah and Virgil, in a few parallel paſſages, fairly exhibited in a tranſlation equally literal, in which the Oriental poet appears to great advantage. There are many parodies, imitations, and paraphraſes of this animated prophet's poetry, all which, at the ſame time that they evince how difficult his excellencies are to be equalled, are proofs that he has been generally admired as a poet.

But,

But, after all, the reader muſt judge of the ſacred writings for himſelf. If he attends to what he feels, and lays aſide prepoſſeſſion, his judgment will be favourable and juſt. To remove a ſingle prejudice, which can prevent the univerſal acceptance of books of univerſal concern, is to contribute greatly to the general happineſs. An attempt to render the prophetic writers objects of particular attention, in an age when our moſt ingenious theologiſts are employed in illuſtrating their meaning at a lecture wiſely eſtabliſhed for that purpoſe, muſt, at leaſt, have the merit of being well-timed.

And ſurely every one who wiſhes to promote the deſirable coalition of taſte with piety, muſt accept, with gratitude, the labours of the venerable Lowth, whoſe lectures on ſacred poetry and obſervations on Iſaiah have diſplayed, in biblical literature, the unexpected charms of claſſic elegance.

ESSAY X.

ON THE PRINCIPLES OF CONVERSATION.

AN appearance of unaffected ſimplicity, the genuine effect of nature not of ſtudy, is the moſt captivating charm of converſation. It is, however, at the ſame time true, that, in a great and undiſtinguiſhing commerce with mankind, it is often neceſſary, both for the purpoſes of affording pleaſure, and avoiding inconvenience, to have recourſe to a ſtudied and artificial behaviour.

Happy indeed would be our ſituation, if we could be ſafe with the innocence of the dove, unmixed with the leſs amiable qualities of the ſerpent. But ſuch is the condition of human nature, that the moſt valuable and lovely diſpoſitions would become an eaſy prey to the deceitful, if they were not guarded by prudential maxims

maxims founded on experience. Converſation has, therefore, been very properly reduced to an art, which may be attended to, without loſing our integrity, or appearing in a falſe or aſſumed character.

One of the firſt and moſt important precepts is, to form a juſt idea of the perſons with whom we converſe. Their diſpoſition, age, ſex, fortune, rank, and character, muſt be conſidered with attention. Without ſuch caution, a man of ſenſe and good intentions may give offence to others, and render himſelf ridiculous.

To excite a good opinion of ourſelves, is a laudable object in converſation. But, in the purſuit of it, great addreſs is neceſſary, to avoid the appearance of a vain, a conceited, a ſelfiſh, and an overbearing diſpoſition.

The moſt effectual methods of raiſing an opinion of ourſelves, without being troubleſome to others, have been preſcribed by a writer* of a neighbouring na-

* Morhof de Conv. Erud.

tion, from whom ſome of the following hints were originally adopted.

Let an appearance of openneſs and honour ſhine forth in our countenance, our words, our actions. An apparent good diſpoſition attracts the minds of beholders with all the ſecret and irreſiſtible influence of magnetiſm. The contrary apperance diſguſts and alarms even thoſe who themſelves have neither honour nor ingenuouſneſs. The *volto ſciolto*, the open countenance, is the moſt effectual recommendation, as it ſpeaks a language underſtood by intuition.

Never diſturb thoſe who are ſeated quietly in the temple of fame. Detraction always implies envy and malevolence; qualities which, though they give riſe to converſation that may afford pleaſure to the ill-natured, always render their poſſeſſor odious, even to his attentive audience. Beſides, it is arrogant to controvert the deciſions of the majority; and arrogance hurts the pride of our companions too much, to permit us any longer to be agreeable.

Be modeſtly oſtentatious. To think too highly of ourſelves, renders us inſupportable; to think too meanly, will tempt the naturally encroaching ſpirit of mankind to trample upon us. Let us know our rank, and boldly claim it. Let us aſſume the degree of confidence which our merit may juſtify*.

Conceal your defects. Caution, ſays Lord Verulam, muſt be uſed to avoid thoſe ſubjects, on which we are conſcious of an incapacity to enlarge. If they ariſe, pretences muſt be invented to apologize for our miſtakes, and to prove that they proceeded, not ſo much from want of judgment, as from unavoidable miſapprehenſion. A degree of confidence, ſays he, muſt be aſſumed, to ſeem to deſpiſe what we cannot obtain.

Talk not forwardly on thoſe arts in which you are known to excel. You are admired for your excellence, while the manner in which it was produced and improved is unknown; but point out the ſteps of your progreſs, and immediately the wonder ceaſes.

* Quæſitam meritis ſume ſuperbiam. Hor.

Avoid the poſſibility of ſinking in the eſteem of your company. We are never truly pleaſed, though perhaps diverted, with what we deſpiſe.

Never give a moment's uneaſineſs either by word or deed. Take the world as you find it, and conform as far as you innocently can with its abſurdities. You may be diſguſted if you pleaſe with your companions, but what will it avail? It will give yourſelf pain, and render you an object of hatred and revenge.

Acquire a verſatility of mind, which will enable you to accommodate your own temper and manners to thoſe of the perſons with whom you converſe.

Avoid a contradicting and diſputatious turn. Oppoſition always occaſions a momentary enmity. And no man can be an agreeable companion who requires proofs and arguments for every aſſertion which may drop in the careleſſneſs of eaſy converſation.

Be univerſally affable. An engaging countenance, an inviting air, a ſoothing voice, carry with them irreſiſtible allurements.

ments. Many poſſeſſed of ſolid merit and amiable diſpoſitions have been but indifferently received in the world, becauſe they have contracted, by intenſe thought or ſome other cauſe, a ſeverity of feature.

Garrulity is intolerable perſecution. Reſerve and exceſſive ſilence are diſagreeable, but far leſs ſo than immoderate talkativeneſs, becauſe they ſuffer the indulgence of one's own thoughts; but the impertinence of the garrulous man forces attention without repaying it.

Any remarkable degree of curioſity is to be avoided. It not only gives pain to others, but defeats its own purpoſe; for he who finds himſelf ſolicitouſly queſtioned, ſuſpects that there is ſome particular reaſon for enquiry, places himſelf on his guard, and refuſes or evades an anſwer to the moſt unimportant interrogations.

A deciſive and magiſterial manner is always diſguſting. The very ſame opinion which, when propoſed with becoming diffidence, is adopted; when of-

fered with an air of inſolence, meets with contempt and rejection.

It is a miſtake which ſome men of learning have fallen into, that when they are in company it is neceſſary to ſay ſomething ſtriking and remarkable. It is not ſo much required that they ſhould diſplay ingenuity on extraordinary ſubjects, as that they ſhould talk on common affairs with eaſe, with good-humour, and without affectation. I have ſeen the enjoyment of an evening interrupted by ſome profound yet judicious remark, which has made all the company ſtare, and cauſed an univerſal ſilence.

A good heart, and a good underſtanding, will learn, after a little converſe with the world, to behave, if not in an attractive, yet in an inoffenſive manner. They may err in matters of form; but their very errors will be amiable, becauſe they will ariſe from unaffected ſimplicity, and will be accompanied with diffidence. But the errors of the vain, the forward, and the aſſuming, however they may be born with through pity or politeneſs, are always deſpiſed and hated.

ESSAY XI.

ON THE GRAVE AND GAY PHILOSOPHY.

THE world has ever been viewed by men of different diſpoſitions in a light totally different. The thoughtful and melancholy have repreſented it as a vale of miſery; the gay and the volatile, as a theatre abounding with delightful entertainments, if the ſpectators are but in good humour. The whole difference indeed, it has been ſaid, ariſes from the various ſtate of the minds of men, and not from any inconſiſtent diverſity in the conſtitution of things. It would therefore ſeem probable that the greater part would embrace the more agreeable ſide, from motives of ſelf-intereſt and gratification. But the

truth is, there are as many followers of Heraclitus as of Democritus.

That there is an eſſential difference in the original form of minds, there is no doubt; and to this cauſe is to be attributed that ſome are gloomy, others cheerful. But habit is often no leſs concerned than nature. For it is remarkable that, among moral writers, thoſe who have enjoyed wealth and the company of the great; and who conſequently partook of various pleaſures, have commonly choſen the comfortable kind of philoſophy; while they who were oppreſſed by want, and excluded from enjoyment, have no leſs naturally repreſented life, ſuch as they found it, as a ſtate of miſery interrupted only by ſhort-lived and unſubſtantial gratifications.

The Engliſh nation is characteriſtically grave, and of courſe the graver kind of philoſophy has been much cultivated in England. There are few books that pleaſe more generally than the Night Thoughts of Young. Hervey's Meditations are more frequently read than many works

works of humour, and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progreſs has given as much pleaſure among the Engliſh vulgar, as the Quixote of Cervantes.

But our increaſe of wealth and our imitation of French and Aſiatic manners, have greatly altered our natural diſpoſition. We begin to reliſh none but the gayer kind of philoſophy. Horace, were he Engliſh, would at preſent be more read than Juvenal, and Lucian than Seneca.

Every admirer of fine compoſition and of ſolid ſenſe muſt be delighted with the Rambler; and yet it is ſaid, that the World, and other leſs ſolid performances, are now more univerſally read and approved. It muſt indeed be confeſſed, that, beſides ſome affectations, which juſtly give offence, thoſe excellent papers induce a melancholy by no means compatible with the true enjoyment of life. They inſpire virtuous ſentiments, but they depreſs thoſe ſpirits which are neceſſary to put them in practice.

The philoſophy of Epicurus is the philoſophy adopted by the greater part, moſt

moſt of whom embrace his tenets without having heard of his name. The truth is, human nature is naturally inclined to purſue pleaſure, and to avoid all that has the appearance of wretchedneſs and woe. Even they who devote themſelves to melancholy find a pleaſure in it; a pleaſure ſcarcely recognized by the gay and luxurious, but yet real and ſatisfactory.

Seneca and Antoninus are ſevere moraliſts. They exhibit life in its leſs pleaſing aſpects, and exact duties not to be performed without painful efforts. But they call forth the latent powers of the mind, and by requiring an exertion beyond the natural ſtrength, really compel it to effect all that it is able. Indolence prevents men in general from effecting all that they are able. The pleaſurable ſyſtem diſſuades them from the attempt. And if there were not ſome auſtere inſtructors and ſome faithful followers of them, there would not be active virtue enough in a community to preſerve its exiſtence.

In

In the earlier periods of ſociety the ſevere philoſophy is moſt cultivated. For then virtuous exertions are moſt neceſſary, and luxurious indulgences precluded. Succeſs, and increaſe in wealth and glory, are the uſual conſequence. Luxury ſucceeds in a courſe as certain in all its ſtages as any phyſical proceſs. A taſte for a light, cheerful, fanciful philoſophy, ſoon explodes the ſullen precepts of rigid moraliſts. Manners are relaxed, and naturally bring on a declenſion of empire. At leaſt all regard for liberty is loſt; and the mind, enervated with pleaſure, gladly ſinks in the repoſe of deſpotiſm.

It is evident that in our own country, the ſeverer philoſophy loſes ground. This, among many others, is a ſymptom of corruption, and the harbinger of decay. An imitation of French manners has greatly accelerated this revolution in our ſentiments. And, after all, it is a forced and unnatural change; for an Engliſhman, whether from the influence of climate, or ſome cauſe inherent in his conſtitution, is by nature grave, and diſ-

poſed

poſed to admit manly thoughts and to practice manly actions.

The influence of books on the national manners of a community, almoſt every member of which devotes ſome part of his time to reading, muſt be important. And among other methods which might be uſed to excite the ſpirit of patriotiſm and political virtue, it might be proper to attempt to reſtore a taſte for ſolid and ſevere morality, and to ridicule thoſe light, ſuperficial, ſentimental, and affected productions, which, while they pleaſe the ſickly mind, encreaſe its imbecillity.

ESSAY XII.

ON THE PLEASURES OF A GARDEN.

Mihi parva rura. HOR.

God firſt planted a garden, and indeed of all human pleaſures, that of a garden is the pureſt. BAC.

—nec vos, dulciſſima mundi
Nomina, vos, Muſæ, Libertas, Otia, Libri,
HORTIque, Sylvæque, animâ remanente, relinquam. COWLEY.

NOT he alone is to be eſteemed a benefactor to mankind, who makes an uſeful diſcovery; but he alſo, who can point out and recommend an innocent pleaſure. Of this kind are the pleaſures ariſing from the obſervation of nature; and they are highly agreeable to every taſte uncorrupted by vicious indulgence.

There will always be many in a rich and civilized country, who, as they are born to the enjoyment of competent eſtates, engage not in buſineſs civil or profeſ-

profeſſional. But the reſtleſs mind muſt either find or make an object. Pleaſure, therefore, becomes, to the unemployed, a ſerious purſuit. Whatever is its eſſence, and whatever the declaimer may urge againſt it, pleaſure will be ſought by all who poſſeſs the liberty of election. It becomes then incumbent on the moraliſt, not only to urge the performance of duty, but to exhibit objects that pleaſe without enervating the mind, and gratify deſire without corrupting the principles.

Rural ſcenes, of almoſt every kind, are delightful to the mind of man. The verdant plain, the flowery mead, the meandering ſtream, the playful lamb, the warbling of birds, are all capable of exciting the gently agreeable emotions. But the misfortune is, that the greater part are hurried on in the career of life with too great rapidity to be able to give attention to that which ſolicits no paſſion. The darkeſt habitation in the dirtieſt ſtreet of the metropolis, where money can be earned, has greater charms, with many, than the groves of Hagley.

Yet the patron of refined pleaſure, the elegant Epicurus, fixed the ſeat of his enjoyment in a garden. He thought a tranquil ſpot, furniſhed with the united ſweets of art and nature, the beſt adapted to delicate repoſe. And even the ſeverer philoſophers of antiquity were wont to diſcourſe in the ſhade of a ſpreading tree, in ſome cultivated plantation.

It is obvious, on intuition, that nature often intended ſolely to pleaſe the eye. She decorates the flowret, that ſprings beneath our feet, in all the perfection of external beauty. She has clothed the garden with a conſtant ſucceſſion of various hues. Even the leaves of the tree undergo a pleaſing viciſſitude. The freſh verdure they exhibit in the ſpring, the various ſhades they aſſume in ſummer, the yellow and ruſſet tinge of autumn, and the nakedneſs of winter, afford a conſtant pleaſure to a pictureſque imagination. From the ſnow-drop to the moſs-roſe, the flower-garden diſplays an infinite variety of ſhape and colour. The taſte of the floriſt has been ridiculed as

trifling;

trifling; yet, ſurely, without reaſon. Did nature bring forth the tulip and the lily, the roſe and the honeyſuckle, to be neglected by the haughty pretender to ſuperior reaſon? To omit a ſingle ſocial duty for the cultivation of a polyanthus, were ridiculous as well as criminal; but to paſs by the beauties laviſhed before us, without obſerving them, is no leſs ingratitude than ſtupidity. A bad heart finds little amuſement but in a communication with the active world where ſcope is given for the indulgence of malignant paſſions; but an amiable diſpoſition is commonly known by a taſte for the beauties of the animal and the vegetable world.

The northern countries of Europe are not the beſt adapted to the natural delights of rural ſcenery. Our vernal ſeaſons, which the poets celebrate in all the luxuriance of deſcription, are commonly rendered cold and uncomfortable, by the long continuance of an eaſtern wind. Our poets borrowed their ideas of a ſpring from the poets of Italy, who collected

lected theirs from nature. A genial day in April, is among us the ſubject of general congratulation. And, while the lilac bloſſoms, and the laburnum drops its golden cluſters, the ſhivering poſſeſſor of them is conſtrained to ſeek warmth at the ſide of his chimney. Yet, from the temperature of our climate we derive a beauty unknown in the gardens of a warmer country. Few objects are more pleaſing than the ſmooth lawn; but the ſoft verdure, which conſtitutes its beauty, is not to be found in more ſouthern climates. It is certainly true, that the rarity of our truly vernal weather, like that of other delights, increaſes the pleaſure of it; and it is probable, for this reaſon, that an Engliſhman, notwithſtanding his complaints againſt his atmoſphere, enjoys the pleaſures of a garden in their full perfection. A fine day, ſays Temple, is a kind of ſenſual pleaſure; but ſurely it would ceaſe to be ſuch, if every day were fine.

A practical attention to a garden, by many, is eſteemed degrading. It

is true, that paſtoral and agricultural manners, if we may believe the dignified deſcriptions of Virgil, are greatly degenerated. The employments of ſhepherds and huſbandmen are now mean and ſordid. The care of the garden is left to a peaſant. Nor is it unreaſonable to aſſign the work, which wearies without amuſement, to thoſe, who are ſufficiently amuſed by the proſpect of their wages. But the operations of grafting *, of inoculating, of pruning, of tranſplanting, are curious experiments in natural philoſophy; and, that they are pleaſing as well as curious, thoſe can teſtify, who remember what they felt on ſeeing their attempts ſucceed.

Among the employments ſuitable to old age, Cicero has enumerated gardening. It requires no great exertion of mind or body; and its ſatisfactions are of that kind which pleaſe without agitation. Their beneficial in-

* Cujus quidem non utilitas me ſolum, ut antedixi, ſed etiam cultura et ipſa natura delectat.—Nec conſitiones modo delectant, ſed etiam INSITIONES, quibus nihil invenit agricultura ſolertius. CIC.

fluence

fluence on health, is an additional reaſon for an attention to them at an age when infirmities abound.

In almoſt every deſcription of the ſeats of the bleſſed, ideas of a garden ſeem to have predominated. The word Paradiſe itſelf is ſynonymous with garden. The fields of Elyſium †, that ſweet region of poeſy, are adorned with all that imagination can conceive to be delightful. Some of the moſt pleaſing paſſages of Milton are thoſe in which he repreſents the happy Pair engaged in cultivating their bliſsful abode. Poets have always been delighted with the beauties of a garden. Lucan is repreſented by Juvenal as repoſing in his garden. Virgil's Georgics prove him to have been captivated with rural ſcenes; though, to the ſurpriſe of his readers, he has not aſſigned a book to the ſubject of a garden. Our

† Surgunt per agros undique roſcidos
Flores amicti mille coloribus,
Solique gemmas explicantes,
Dulce nitent radiante vultu.
JORTIN ex Pind.

Shenſtone made it his ſtudy; but, with all his taſte and fondneſs for it, he was not happy in it. The captivating ſcenes which he created at the Leaſowes, afforded him, it is ſaid, little pleaſure in the abſence of ſpectators. The truth is, he made the embelliſhment of his grounds, which ſhould have been the amuſement of his life, the buſineſs of it; and involved himſelf in ſuch troubles, by the expences it occaſioned, as neceſſarily excluded tranquil enjoyment.

It is the lot of few to poſſeſs territories like his, ſufficiently extenſive to conſtitute an ornamented farm. Still fewer are capable of ſupporting the expence of preſerving it in good condition. But let not the rich ſuppoſe they have appropriated the pleaſures of a garden. The poſſeſſor of an acre, or a ſmaller portion, may receive a real pleaſure, from obſerving the progreſs of vegetation, even in a culinary plant. A very limited tract, properly attended to, will furniſh ample employment for an individual. Nor let it be thought a mean care; for the ſame

hand

hand that raiſed the cedar, formed the hyſſop on the wall. Even the orchard, cultivated ſolely for advantage, exhibits beauties unequalled in the ſhrubbery; nor can the green-houſe produce an appearance to match the bloſſom of the apple and the almond.

Amuſement reigns, ſays Dr. Young, man's great demand. Happy were it, if the amuſement of managing a garden were more generally reliſhed. It would ſurely be more conducive to health, and the preſervation of our faculties to extreme old age, were that time which is now devoted to the dice and to the card-table, ſpent in the open air, and in active employment.

ESSAY XIII.

THE STORY OF A STUDENT.

Μηδεν αγαν.

I Happened accidentally to meet a fellow-collegian, with whom, before we were ſeparated by the caprice of fortune, I was intimately acquainted. Surely it is he, ſaid I; but, alas, how changed! pale, emaciated, with hollow and lack-luſtre eye, is this my old ſchool-fellow, whoſe ruddy cheeks and cheerful countenance diſplayed health and happineſs? What can have reduced my poor friend to ſo wretched a condition? Intemperance, or ſome dreadful diſeaſe, muſt have ſtolen away his youth, and hurried him to a premature old age.

While

While I was thus reflecting, he paſſed me without taking notice. He ſeemed indeed to be ſo entirely wrapped up in contemplation, as to pay no regard to external objects. My curioſity and friendſhip were too much intereſted, to ſuffer him to leave me without giving ſome account of himſelf. I ſoon overtook him, and he no ſooner recogniſed me, and perceived my ſurpriſe at his appearance, than he proceeded to aſſign the cauſes of it.

" You know, my friend, ſaid he, my
" firſt and ſtrongeſt paſſion was for lite-
" rary fame. Flattered by my friends, and
" encouraged at my ſchool, I perſuad-
" ed myſelf I was advancing in the ca-
" reer of glory, and with all the ardour
" of enthuſiaſm devoted every moment
" of my life to the purſuit of learning.
" Puerile diverſions had no charms for
" me. A book was my ſole delight,
" my conſtant companion, and was ne-
" ver laid aſide, but while my mind
" was employed in compoſition. Du-
" ring my reſidence at the univerſity,

" I ſpent the time which my compani-
" ons allotted to rural amuſements, in
" examining thoſe repoſitories of ancient
" learning, the public libraries. I ſaw
" indeed the futility of ſcholaſtic logic,
" but a deſire to qualify myſelf for the
" public exerciſes, led me to the at-
" tentive peruſal of Wallis and Saun-
" derſon. The ſame motive engaged
" me in the dreary ſubtilties of meta-
" phyſics. Such ſtudies engroſſed the
" greater part of my firſt three years,
" with little advantage and no plea-
" ſure. The fatigue would have been
" intolerable, had it not ſometimes been
" alleviated by the charms of poetry.
" My favourite Virgil and Horace, and
" every polite writer of modern times,
" afforded, in their turn, an agreeable
" recreation. My exerciſes were ho-
" nourably diſtinguiſhed, and praiſe to
" an ingenuous mind is the beſt reward
" of learned labours.

" With my character for application
" and ſobriety, not to boaſt of my at-
" tainments, I found no difficulty in

" obtaining

" obtaining orders. The head of my
" houſe procured me a curacy in a ſmall
" country town. Thither I went, not
" without my collection of books, the
" uſe of which I would not have fore-
" gone for a mitre. I had no other wiſh
" than to improve myſelf in learning,
" and to perform the duty of an eccle-
" ſiaſtic with decency and devotion.
" I was happy in the proſpect of ſpend-
" ing my time uninterrupted by the
" intruſion of my academical friends,
" whom youth and high ſpirits would
" often lead to a noiſy behaviour little
" conſiſtent with meditation. My want
" of experience concealed from me
" the difficulty of purſuing the line of
" conduct which inclination pointed
" out. I found it was neceſſary to my
" good reception among my pariſh-
" ioners, to give up the greateſt part
" of the day to a participation in their
" amuſements. In vain was it that I
" laboured to excel in the pulpit.
" There was not a man in the place
" who had an idea of the dignity or

" utility

" utility of literary excellence, and
" who would not moſt cordially have
" hated even a Clarke or a Tillotſon, if
" he had never been in at the death of
" a hare, nor drank his bottle at the
" club. The parſon, in their idea of
" his character, was a jolly fellow in
" black, who was to lead a careleſs life
" all the week, and preach againſt it on
" Sundays. I could not bring myſelf
" to take delight in a fox-chace, and
" though good-nature prevented me
" from ſhewing my diſlike, I could ne-
" ver meet any of the hunters with
" ſatisfaction. The little pleaſure I
" took in the only ſociety that was to
" be obtained, ſtill farther confirmed
" me in my recluſe mode of life. When
" my reſolution appeared unchangeable,
" I was ſuffered to live as I pleaſed,
" with the character of an odd, but
" inoffenſive man. In this unmoleſted
" retreat, I found time to go through
" a complete courſe of eccleſiaſtical
" hiſtory. I acquired a ſufficient know-
" ledge of the oriental languages to enable

" me

" me to read the Polyglott. I wrote
" a great number of ſermons and
" theological treatiſes, and made many
" corrections in the vulgar tranſlation
" of the Bible. So wholly engroſſed
" was I by my darling purſuits, that I
" ſeldom left my chamber. In vain
" did the vernal ſun invite. The mu-
" ſic of a pack of hounds, which fre-
" quently paſſed my window, had no
" charms in my ears. The rural ſports
" of every kind were tedious and in-
" ſipid. To my books I returned from
" every trifling avocation, with re-
" doubled pleaſure, and endeavoured
" to repay the loſs of an hour in the
" day, by devoting a great portion of
" the night to ſtudy.

" It is really true, that my chief mo-
" tive for application was a love of
" learning. Yet I will be ſo ingenuous
" as to own, I ſometimes formed a wiſh,
" that my ſmall ſhare of merit, if I
" had any, might attract the notice of
" my ſuperiors. There is a time of
" life when fame alone appears to be

" an

" an inadequate reward of great labour.
" It flatters that natural love of diſtinc-
" tion which we all poſſeſs, but it fur-
" niſhes no convenience in the time of
" want and infirmity. There was in the
" neighbourhood a little living of one
" hundred a year, with a houſe and
" garden, in a ſtyle of decent elegance
" which becomes a ſcholar. The pa-
" tron was the eſquire of the next pa-
" riſh, who had always treated me with
" ſingular reſpect. I was fooliſh enough
" to ſuppoſe his regard for my charac-
" ter would induce him to beſtow his
" benefice on me, but I found when it
" became vacant, he had ſtaked and
" loſt the next preſentation at a game
" at whiſt with a clerical fox-hunter.

" I was at laſt taken notice of by my
" dioceſan. He had heard of my inde-
" fatigable diligence, and recommended
" me to an eminent publiſher, as a pro-
" per perſon to make an index to a very
" voluminous work. I eagerly under-
" took the taſk, with a view to pleaſe ſo
" great a man, and finiſhed it in leſs than

" a year

" a year and a half. The books were
" printed on a ſmall letter, and this
" work did my eyes an injury which they
" will never recover; but it muſt be owned,
" on the other hand, that the bookſeller
" gave me in return a bank note of
" ten pounds. An index author ſeldom
" acquires reputation. He is indeed
" ſeldom known, but if he happens to
" be diſcovered, the accuracy of his
" work, is in the opinion of many, a diſ-
" grace to him. It ſeems to argue a
" degree of phlegmatic dulneſs, rarely
" in the power of genius. It will not
" therefore be thought wonderful that
" this laborious work produced no other
" effect than the injury of my eyes, and
" the payment of my taylor's bill.

" In this curacy I ſtill continue, with-
" out any proſpect of change, unleſs
" when blindneſs, occaſioned by intem-
" perate ſtudy or the infirmities of age,
" ſhall oblige me to reſign. I am not
" of a diſcontented diſpoſition, nor do I
" relate my condition with a deſign to
" criminate others for their neglect of
" me,

" me. Preferment I never ſought by
" thoſe methods which the world agrees
" to be the beſt ſuited to procure it.
" I have therefore no right to complain
" of the want of that which I did not
" purſue. My motive for this commu-
" nication is to prevent others from in-
" curring miſery by a too great attach-
" ment to objects laudable in them-
" ſelves. I can never diſcountenance
" an attention to literature. I ſtill love
" it. I ſtill venerate thoſe that have
" excelled in it. But a ſincere regard
" for the moſt amiable and uſeful of my
" ſpecies, induces me to remind them,
" that they have a body which requires
" a great ſhare of their attention, and
" that no ſatisfaction ariſing from ſtudy
" can ultimately counterbalance the loſs
" of ſight, and that long train of ner-
" vous diſeaſes ſuperinduced by unre-
" mitted application.

" I mean not to excite your ſympathy;
" nor will I exaggerate my evils by de-
" ſcription. My appearance has al-
" ready convinced you that I am the

" victim

" victim of diſeaſe. Nor will you heſi-
" tate to believe that the ſtone, the
" gout, the hypochondria, which have
" worn out my tender frame, were de-
" rived from an attention unrelieved
" by the uſual and neceſſary relaxations.
" Had I been wiſe enough to have
" mounted a horſe during the intervals
" of reading, and to have entered into
" cheerful company at the cloſe of a
" thoughtful day, I might have pro-
" longed my favourite enjoyments to a
" happy old age.

" I am philoſopher enough to bear
" with patience a condition which I
" cannot alter, yet I ſometimes think,
" though without the leaſt degree of
" envy, that an old ſchool-fellow of
" mine, of a very different turn from
" myſelf, is far happier. I remember
" I uſed to laugh at him, and think him
" very ſilly, when, at the time we were
" at the Univerſity together, he uſed to
" miſs an ingenious lecture for the ſake
" of a ride, and ſpend the three ſhillings,
" with which I ſhould have bought a

" book, in the hire of a horſe. It is
" true, indeed, that he need not, and
" ought not, to have neglected his men-
" tal improvement, becauſe he had
" many opportunities of relaxation after
" the hours of ſtudy were elapſed. Yet
" if I judge of his conduct by the ap-
" parent effects of it at preſent, it ap-
" pears to me in a leſs blameable light
" than it uſed to do. He is now at the
" age of ſixty-three, for he was ſome-
" what older than myſelf, and retains
" all the vigour and alertneſs of a young
" man. His countenance is hale, his
" limbs muſcular, and he reads the ſervice
" and the news-paper, the only things
" he does read, without ſpectacles.

" He ſet out in life as friendleſs as
" myſelf. He engaged in a curacy in a
" ſporting country. His love of field-
" diverſions ſoon introduced him to what
" was called the beſt company. He
" poſſeſſed the external graces of beha-
" viour, and at the ſame time was deeply
" ſkilled in horſe-fleſh, and had Brac-
" ken's Farriery by heart. Such merits

" could

" could not long paſs unrewarded. A
" baronet in the neighbourhood grew
" fond of him, and introduced him to his
" family; one of whom was an only
" daughter, of no great perſonal or
" mental accompliſhments. My friend,
" however, admired her fortune, and
" found no difficulty in obtaining her
" hand. The living on which he now
" reſides was part of her portion, and
" though of no great value, yet it fur-
" niſhes him with a pretty ſnug ſporting-
" box. He commonly reads prayers in
" his boots and ſpurs, while his hunter
" ſtands neighing in the porch till honeſt
" Moſes has twanged through his noſe
" the joyful Amen. It is true, my old
" friend has no taſte, no learning, no
" refinement, but he has the uſe of his
" eyes, and a never-ceaſing flow of
" ſpirits; he can walk as well as ever,
" has an excellent digeſtion, and plenty to
" furniſh it with conſtant employment."

" But his example is not to be fol-
" lowed, ſince he has run into an ex-
" treme, more culpable, though leſs per-

" nicious to himſelf, than mine is to me.
" Far happier and wiſer the philoſophical
" Euphranor, who, with the warmeſt af-
" fection for learning, reſtrained it, as he
" has every other inordinate attachment,
" by the rules of prudence; and by pay-
" ing all the attention which nature and
" reaſon require, to his body and to his
" mind, has advanced them both to the
" higheſt degree of poſſible perfection."

ESSAY XIV.

ON SATIRE AND SATIRISTS.

THE good reception which that ſpecies of Poetry called Satire has commonly met with in the world, is perhaps owing to ſome diſpoſitions in human nature, not the moſt amiable. It derives not its power of pleaſing, like other poetry, from its effect on the imagination. It raiſes no enchanting proſpects; it is not neceſſarily employed in fiction. A ſpirit of indignation is its eſſential principle, and by cauſing a ſimilar ſpirit in the reader, it gently gratifies the iraſcible paſſions.

It muſt be owned, that it has ſeldom anſwered its oſtenſible end of reforming the age. Yet allowing it to be of

little uſe, it is often compoſed with ſuch evident marks of genius as renders it intereſting to men of taſte. And though ſpleen may have given riſe to its firſt production, and the love of cenſure enſured its ſucceſs, yet the beauties of the compoſition will cauſe it to be read, even by thoſe who diſapprove perſonal invective, long after the reſentment that occaſioned it has ſubſided.

The origin of Satire has cauſed much controverſy among the learned. The etymology of the name has employed, to very little purpoſe, the time and ſagacity of ſuch ſcholars as Voſſius, Dacier, Scaliger, and Caſaubon *.

Its hiſtory, like all other hiſtories, when traced too high, becomes obſcure. But Horace has ſaid, (and who can pretend to a knowledge of the ſubject equal to his?) that Lucilius was the firſt that wrote juſt and legitimate Satire. The writers who preceded him were ſufficiently pointed, but their productions were irre-

* The idea of the lanx ſatura ſeems to be generally received.

gular

gular and incorrect, illiberal in their ſentiments, and ſcurrilous in their language.

Horace, the politeſt writer whom the world ever produced, adopted ſatirical writing, and ſucceeded in it, though there is every reaſon to believe his natural diſpoſition was not ſevere. The truth is, he was a man of the world, as well as a man of reflection, and wrote his remarks on men and things in careleſs verſe; not without cenſuring them indeed, but without indulging aſperity. He probed every wound with ſo gentle a hand, that the patient ſmiled under the operation. The gay friend of Mæcenas had lived in courts, and knew too much of the world to think he could reform it by ſeverity.

Not ſo the ſtern Juvenal. With all the warmth of a zealot in the cauſe of virtue, he pours his majeſtic verſe, and, amid the moſt ſpirited invective and fine morality, emits many a luminous irradiation of beautiful deſcriptive poetry.

His predeceſſor Perſius had afforded him a noble model. He improved on it in

nothing but perſpicuity. Perſius is all fire, ſpirit, animation. The frequency of his interrogations rouſes the attention of the reader, and it is not eaſy to read and underſtand him without catching the glow with which he evidently wrote. If his obſcurity aroſe from fear, it does not indeed depreciate his merit as a writer; but it has cauſed him to be leſs read and admired than he deſerves. The laſt lines of his ſecond Satire are alone ſufficient to entitle him to immortality *.

The Engliſh ſeem to have copied the manner of Juvenal rather than of Horace. Our national ſpirit is indeed of the manly and rough kind, and feels ſomething congenial with itſelf in the vehemence of the ſullen Juvenal.

The Roman is remarkably harmonious. But Donne, his imitator, ſeems to have

* Quin damus id ſuperis, de magna quod dare lance
Non poſſit magni Meſſalæ lippa propago;
Compoſitum jus, faſque animo: ſanctoſque receſſus
Mentis et incoctum generoſo pectus honeſto.

thought

thought a roughneſs of verſe, as well as of ſentiment, a real grace. It is ſcarcely poſſible, that a writer who did not ſtudiouſly avoid a ſmooth verſification, could have written ſo many lines without ſtumbling on a good one. Pope has revived his fame by attuning his harſh numbers; a work whoſe very excellence makes us regret that a genius ſo fertile as was the bard's of Twickenham, ſhould have waſted its vigour in paraphraſes and tranſlations.

This verſatile poet has imbibed the very ſpirit of Horace. Nor can the mere Engliſh reader obtain, by the tranſlations of Creech or of Francis, ſo clear and adequate an idea of the true Horatian manner, as from the liberal imitations of Pope.

Dryden ſeems to have preferred the model of his favourite Juvenal. His nervous line was well adapted to ſatire. He ſays himſelf, "he could write ſeverely, "with more eaſe than he could write "gently." His Abſalom and Achitophel, and his Mac Flecknoe, are maſter-

pieces in the ſerious and vehement kind of Satire.

Boileau ſeems to have blended with judgment the manner of Horace and Juvenal. Whatever degree of elegance he poſſeſſes, the natural monotony of French verſe tires an ear accuſtomed to the various harmony of our Engliſh poets. The French language never appears ſo meanly as in the heroic couplet. He who reads the Henriade, and happens to think of Milton, Dryden, Garth, or Pope, muſt cloſe the volume with all the loathing of diſguſt. He who reads Boileau, will find his improving imitator Pope riſe in his opinion. Pope rouſes the attention by all the changes of muſical modulation; Boileau ſooths it to dull repoſe by the lullaby of ſimilar pauſes conſtantly repeated.

A poet of our own, little attended to at preſent, once enjoyed a very high degree of fame as a ſatirical writer. Oldham has been called the Engliſh Juvenal. His ſatire on the Jeſuits has indeed much of the ſpirit of Juvenal. It diſplays wit,

wit, force, pungency, and a very copious invention; but it is no leſs diſtinguiſhed by a coarſeneſs and vulgarity, which muſt prevent Oldham from keeping his place among the claſſics of our country. He has laſhed the Jeſuits with deſerved and unrelenting rigour; but though ſevere puniſhment is often neceſſary, yet to ſee it inflicted without mercy, is not agreeable. There are ſome works of poetry as well as of painting, which, though well executed as pieces of art, loſe the praiſe their excellence demands, by the ſhocking nature of their repreſentations.

A later ſatiriſt, Dr. Young, is ſtill read with pleaſure. But he has the fault of Seneca, of Ovid, of Cowley; a profuſion and an unſeaſonable application of wit. His ſatires have been juſtly called a ſtring of epigrams. A lover of originality, he did not regard models. Had he endeavoured to imitate Juvenal or Perſius, he would have avoided this fault. Thoſe great maſters were too much engroſſed by the importance of their ſubjects to fall into the puerility of witticiſm.

There is alſo ſomething in Young's verſification which a good ear does not approve.

But even Young, popular as he was, has been eclipſed by a poet who has ſhone with the effulgence and the inſtability of a meteor. Churchill poſſeſſed merit; a merit which was magnified when ſeen through the medium of party, beyond that degree which it was able to ſupport. When reaſon at laſt viewed what paſſion had exaggerated, ſhe was diſguſted with the diſappointment, and turned away with neglect. Thus the celebrated Churchill, with whoſe applauſe the town re-echoed, is ſinking to an oblivion which he hardly deſerves; for though he wrote many careleſs lines and many dull paſſages, yet the greater part of his productions diſplayed a genuine vein of ſatirical genius.

Within a few years Satire has re-aſſumed her original rude form of ſcurrilous and petulant abuſe. An improved verſification has given a gloſs to the moſt illiberal invectives. An undaunted effrontery, recommended by tolerable rhymes, has

ſup-

ſupplied the want of every claſſical and noble ornament. That it has been well received, is no proof of its ſolid excellence as compoſition, ſince to the greater part of readers, the abuſe which it laviſhly pours on public and private characters, is a ſufficient recommendation.

It differs from claſſical Satire in this, as well as other circumſtances. Horace, Perſius, Juvenal, abound with the fineſt moral ſentiments. They not only put vice to ſhame, but countenanced virtue, and pointed out the way to attain to it. But the ſatiriſts of our times ſeem to have little elſe in view, than to gratify private pique, or party-prejudice. It is indeed ſcarcely to be expected that in a degenerate age, many will be found to poſſeſs dignity of character and ſolidity of judgment, in a degree ſufficient to enable them to ſtand forth as diſintereſted cenſors of prevailing manners,

ESSAY XV.

ON PREACHING AND SERMON WRITERS.

FEW inſtitutions can contribute more to preſerve civilization, and promote moral and intellectual improvement among all ranks of people, than the eſtabliſhment of public lectures, in every part of the kingdom, periodically repeated after a ſhort interval.

Such is the light in which the diſcourſes appointed by the wiſdom of the church, to be every where held on the recurrence of the ſeventh day, are to be conſidered. By theſe the meaneſt and the moſt illiterate are enabled to hear moral and philoſophical treatiſes on every thing that concerns their ſeveral duties, without expence, and without ſolicitation.

And whatever is urged by men, who are ill-affected to all eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments,

bliſhments, there is no doubt but that great political, as well as moral, benefit is derived to ſociety, from a practice thus univerſal. But it is a misfortune long ago lamented, that men are incapable of eſtimating the real value of advantages, till experience has ſhewn what it is to want them.

It is certainly true, that ſince the acquiſition of books has been facilitated by their numbers, oral inſtruction is rendered leſs neceſſary. But though books are eaſily procured, yet even in this age of information, there are thouſands in the lower claſſes who cannot read. Beſides, it is a well known truth, that the ſame precepts inculcated by a living inſtructor, adorned by a proper oratory, enforced by a ſerious and authoritative manner, produce a powerful effect, not to be experienced in ſolitary retirement. There is likewiſe a ſympathy communicated in a numerous audience, which attaches the mind more ſtrongly to the ſpeaker.

The

The obvious utility of diſcourſes from the pulpit is proved by the deciſions of experience. For, notwithſtanding the complaints againſt the levity and profaneneſs of the age, churches are ſtill frequented with apparent pleaſure. And to be placed in a ſituation where a good preacher preſides, is by many eſteemed a very eſſential requiſite to an agreeable retreat.

For excellent preachers this nation has been long diſtinguiſhed; excellent, not ſo much in the talents of an orator, as in the compoſition of diſcourſes. With an uncultivated voice, in an uncouth manner, accompanied with aukward attitudes, they have delivered harangues unequalled in the ſchools of Athens. As the French have exhibited their characteriſtic levity even in their boaſted ſermons; ſo the Engliſh have diſplayed their characteriſtic ſolidity.

The ſermons of the laſt century are indeed too long for the attention of modern indolence, but they abound with beauty that would reward it. Jeremy Taylor poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed an invention profuſely fertile; a warm, rich, lively imagination; a profound knowledge of authors, ſacred and profane, poetical, hiſtorical, philoſophical. He has embelliſhed his ſermons with citations from them, and has interwoven their gold into the rich tiſſue of his fine compoſition. When the little tarniſh which they have contracted through time, is removed by the ſkilful modernizer, there are few ſermons in the language equal to thoſe of this prodigy of parts and learning. Perhaps the juvenile preacher would act more judiciouſly in uſing the abbreviated diſcourſes of ſuch divines, than in venturing to produce his own leſs mature lucubrations.

Nearly at the ſame time with Taylor aroſe Iſaac Barrow; a mighty genius, whoſe ardour was capable of accompliſhing all it undertook. The tide of his eloquence flows with ſmooth yet irreſiſtible rapidity. He treats his ſubject with mathematical preciſion, and never leaves it till he has exhauſted it. It has been ſaid, that a late moſt popular orator in

the Houſe of Lords aſſerted, that he owed much of the fire of his eloquence to the ſtudy of Barrow.

His editor, Tillotſon, is more popular. His merit is unqueſtionably great, and his fame has been extended to very exalted heights by the praiſes of Addiſon. He writes with ſufficient judgment and perſpicuity; but there are thoſe who venture to ſuggeſt, that he has been too much celebrated as a model of fine compoſition. They allow him every praiſe as a moſt excellent divine; but when they conſider him as a writer, they think his periods might have been ſhorter, and his rhythm more harmonious.

Of a very different character, South has obtained a great and deſerved reputation. Wit was his talent, yet he often reaches ſublimity. He is, however, one of thoſe authors who is to be admired and not imitated. To excite a laugh from the pulpit, is to inſpire the hearer with a levity of temper ill-adapted to the indulgence of devotional feelings. The taſte of the age in which South

flouriſhed

flouriſhed countenanced pulpit jocularity. But though the lovers of comedy have found their taſte gratified in the peruſal of South's ſermons, yet the man of ſerious judgment will diſcover many ſolid arguments, and many judicious obſervations, intermixed with proſaic epigrams.

The ſagacious Clarke pretended not to wit. He affected not the ambitious ornaments of rhetoric. He rarely reaches the ſublime, or aims at the pathetic; but in a clear, manly, flowing ſtyle, he delivers the moſt important doctrines, confirmed on every occaſion by well-applied paſſages from ſcripture. If he was not a ſhining orator, according to the ideas of rhetoricians, he was a very agreeable as well as uſeful preacher. He was not orthodox in his opinions; a circumſtance which has lowered his character among many. Certain it is, that he would have done more good in the world, had he confined his labours to practical divinity. Speculative and polemical divinity commonly diffuſes ſcepticiſm, without con-

tributing any thing to moral reformation.

The ſermons that have been preached at Boyle's Lectures are ſome of the beſt argued in the language. They have been the laboured productions of the moſt ingenious men. But the whole collection never did ſo much good as a ſingle practical diſcourſe of Tillotſon.

Atterbury was a polite writer. His ſermons probably owed ſome of their fame, among his contemporaries, who have laviſhly applauded him, to his mode of delivery in the pulpit; for the Tatler ſays, it was ſuch as would have been approved by a Longinus and Demoſthenes. He ſeems to have introduced the very judicious method of addreſſing the underſtanding in the beginning, and the paſſions at the cloſe of the ſermon.

Rogers, ſays his panegyriſt Dr. Burton, poſſeſſed an eloquence, nervous, ſimple, perſuaſive, and beautiful. An unſtudied elegance marked his ſtyle. He ſeems to have attained to that nice judgment, which adapted the ſame diſ-

courſe to a ruſtic, a city, an academical congregation. In a profeſſed elogium it is indeed allowable to exaggerate, yet what Burton has advanced is confirmed by a peruſal of the ſermons of Rogers. They are perſpicuous, ſolid, and written with remarkable eaſe.

Of all the late ſermon writers, Seed is the moſt popular. With a rich and ſportive fancy he combined a ſolid judgment. Unlike the generality of thoſe writers who affect to be flowery, he abounds in ſound argument, and in juſt remarks on human life. A ſevere critic would condemn him for a profuſion of embelliſhment; but I know not how it is, he had the ſkill to give repeated pleaſure without ſatiety.

Such are the more popular of our Engliſh ſermon-writers, the models of thoſe many divines, who with very great merit do not poſſeſs the reputation of originality. To enumerate them all were an endleſs taſk; for of no books in the Engliſh language has there been ſo unceaſing a ſucceſſion, as of ſermons.

Of late there have appeared publications of ſermons addreſſed to perſons of particular ages. Though ſome of theſe have exhibited a highly florid eloquence, and were received with great applauſe, yet they were too much ornamented, and, like many kinds of food, poſſeſſed a ſweetneſs which delights for a moment, but ſoon terminates in loathing. They amuſed the imagination, and ſometimes touched the heart; but they left little employment to the underſtanding.

Sermons which came forth with leſs eclat, will ſtand a better chance of deſcending to poſterity. Such are thoſe of Sherlock, Secker, and Jortin. The happineſs of mankind is concerned in the preſervation of their works, while thoſe of the frothy declaimer are daily dropping unregretted into the gulph of oblivion.

Yet is it to be lamented, that the glaring and meretricious embelliſhments of the ſuperficial writer are more commonly imitated, than the chaſter beauties of the auſtere divine. Fine language, as it

is called, with a few hacknied ſentiments and addreſſes to the paſſions, often conſtitute the whole merit of diſcourſes preached before the moſt numerous congregations in the metropolis.

The paſtors of the largeſt flocks uſually affect popularity. Extemporary preaching is one of the moſt effectual means of obtaining it. It always pleaſes the vulgar; probably becauſe it conveys the idea of immediate inſpiration. It is true alſo, that by pleaſing it is enabled to affect the vulgar. But yet there are many reaſons to prevent its reception among the judicious. It may raiſe the paſſions, it may communicate a momentary fit of devotion; but from its haſty production it can ſeldom be poliſhed or ſolid. It is, indeed, ſeldom attempted but by the ſuperficial. The greateſt divines have not been preſumptuous enough to lay before their audience the effuſions of the moment, but have uſually beſtowed much time and care in the compoſition of a ſingle ſermon. We are indeed informed, that Clarke ſometimes preached

without written notes; but the number of his printed ſermons is a proof that this was not his general practice. They who poſſeſs the abilities of a Clarke may, however, ſafely venture to produce an unpremeditated harangue. But they would do right to recollect, that the orations even of a Demoſthenes ſmelt of the lamp.

Againſt thoſe who prepare their diſcourſes, a general complaint has been made, that ſermons are become in theſe days merely moral eſſays. There was a time when a paſſage from ſcripture, well introduced, was eſteemed a flower of ſpeech far ſurpaſſing every ornament of rhetoric. It is now avoided as an ugly patch, that chequers with deformity the gloſſy contexture.

A profeſſed chriſtian preacher, addreſſing a profeſſed chriſtian audience, ſhould remember, that, however beautiful his diſcourſe, if it is no more than a moral diſcourſe, he may preach it, and they may hear it, and yet both continue unconverted heathens.

Every

Every congregation of real chriſtians wiſhes to find all morality deduced from ſcripture, and confirmed by it. Moral precepts, thus adorned, come from the pulpit as from an oracle. Scriptural language is not inelegant; but if it were, a preacher ſhould let motives of duty exclude oſtentation. In truth, he never appears to greater advantage, than when he ſeems to forget his own excellence, and to loſe ſight of himſelf in his endeavour to promote the welfare of his audience.

ESSAY XVI.

ON LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS.

TO falſe and careleſs reaſoning moſt of the misfortunes of life are to be attributed. Logic then, as an art, is perhaps ſo far uſeful in the conduct of life, as it ſuperinduces a habit of accurate reaſoning.

But what ſays experience? Is the man who has digeſted Burgerſdicius found to be wiſer in his actions than others? The beſt diſputant that ever conquered in the ſchools, when he has deſcended to the walks of common life, has been found no leſs prone to deviate into the paths of error, to be involved in the clouds of paſſion, and miſled by the falſe lights of imagination, than the buſy multitude who never heard of the categories.

They

They who poſſeſs common ſenſe in a competent degree, will diſcover, with no other aid, the fallacy of wrong reaſoning. They who are deficient in it, will not find a ſubſtitute in the uſe of a ſyllogiſm.

The great numbers who ſupply civil and commercial offices, in which there is a conſtant neceſſity for the exertion of reaſon, and who conduct the moſt important affairs without the aid of ſcholaſtic logic, are proofs that vigorous nature wants not this ſlender aſſiſtance. To imagine that a well-formed mind cannot reaſon well without logic, is no leſs abſurd, than to ſuppoſe that the ſolid oak is ſupported by the ivy that creeps around it.

The beſt ſchool for the improvement of reaſon is the living world. We find the illiterate, who have ſpent their lives in conſtant action, poſſeſſing a very extenſive knowledge of things, and a moſt accurate method of judging of them; a knowledge and a method to which the cultivated reaſoner can ſeldom attain.

It

It is common to ſee the learned academic, whoſe labours are at laſt rewarded by a rural benefice, unable, notwithſtanding his acquired ſtrength of reaſon, to cope with the rude ruſtic in a bargain for dues which the laws have allotted him.

It ſeems, then, that the gradual decay of logical ſtudies, and the contempt in which ſyllogiſtic ſkill is held, is not unreaſonable. It contributes little to the benefit of ſociety. It is rather injurious to it, by drawing off that attention which might be uſefully beſtowed. What then ſhall we ſay? Muſt an art, which our forefathers have ſtudied from age to age, and to which ourſelves have devoted our firſt years at our univerſities, be exploded? A veneration is due to long eſtabliſhed opinions. The powers of judging, which ſtimulate the preſent age to innovation, were poſſeſſed by the paſt in equal perfection. Some reaſon they had for their inſtitutions. The ſame reaſon may perhaps remain to prevent the total abolition of them; for truth

and

and reaſon are unchangeable. Our anceſtors eſtabliſhed logical ſtudies, becauſe in their days there were few other books to be obtained, and no other learning prized. Their deſcendants muſt continue to beſtow on them a moderate attention, becauſe every part of knowledge contributes to accompliſh the profeſſed ſcholar. But they need give no more than a moderate attention, becauſe the improvements in philoſophy, and the great multiplication of books in every part of human learning, enable the ſtudent to ſpend his time and ſagacity more uſefully and more agreeably.

He who poſſeſſes the genius and taſte of the attic Harris, will do right to cultivate it by ſtudying the unread works of Porphyry and Ammonius, Plotinus and Jamblichus. Our Engliſh Ariſtotle, whoſe productions are at once the quinteſſence of elegance, and prodigies of analytical ingenuity, has pointed out flowers in thoſe paths of learning where thorns only were ſeen before. The Stagyrite was literally idolized; and had it been

been the fate of Harris to have lived a few centuries ago, he alſo would have been honoured with a ſubordinate deification. If any thing can reſtore a taſte for theſe languiſhing ſtudies, it is the grace which his ſtyle and his accuracy have given them.

For metaphyſics what can be ſaid? If every book that has been written on them, and thouſands have been written, were annihilated, not a ſingle individual in the great community of all mankind would in any one reſpect have juſt reaſon to lament the loſs. Mathematical and arithmetical ſtudies are ſpeculative, it is true; but they do not terminate in ſpeculation. They afford a great pleaſure, abſtractedly conſidered, by the full evidence with which they diſplay their truths; but they tend to obvious utility as well as delight. The builder, the navigator, almoſt every mechanic art, is aſſiſted by geometry, and all men without exception in ſome degree benefited by arithmetic. But metaphyſics tend only to benight the underſtanding

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in a cloud of its own making, to loſe it in a labyrinth of its own contrivance.

Metaphyſics were once encouraged and cultivated, becauſe they ſerved the purpoſes of ſuperſtition. They involved theological ſubjects in a perplexity which the ſimple could never unravel. They gave an air of myſtery and depth, which caught the admiration of the vulgar. They are now employed, in a ſimilar manner, in the ſervice of infidelity. They have induced the half learned and the conceited, thoſe who think they underſtand them, and thoſe who wiſh to be thought by others to underſtand them, to adopt, without being apprehenſive of danger, opinions fatal to their own happineſs and to the exiſtence of ſociety.

Even when cultivated by the honeſt and truly ingenious, they exhibit an inſtance of blameable pride. They aim at a ſcience to which man can never attain. It is truly laughable, to obſerve a creature with hardly knowledge enough of the things around him to guide him with ſafety, perplexing himſelf with ontological

ontological enquiries into the nature of angels, and the eſſence of the devil.

The ontologiſts and pneumatologiſts, the nominales and reales, the doctores ſeraphici, and all the tribe of microſcopic philoſophers, are, in the preſent age of diſcernment, totally neglected. Even Malebranche and Locke, the moſt rational of the metaphyſicians, are daily loſing ground. As a taſk they are attended to in public ſeminaries, where ſome obſolete plan of ſtudy requires metaphyſical exerciſes; but the multitude of more agreeable works ſeldom leave time or inclination, to the ſtudent who is at liberty to chuſe his books, for the controverſy concerning innate ideas. A few however, in the preſent times, have been ſo unfortunate, as to waſte their labours in defending materialiſm, in expatiating on liberty and neceſſity, in diffuſing ſcepticiſm, and in proving that man is no more than an animal.

Such miſerable effects of metaphyſical reſearch have induced an amiable writer, whoſe heart and abilities vie with each

each other for excellence, to vindicate the nature and immutability of truth, to expoſe the futility of metaphyſics, to confound the devices of their patrons, and to eſtabliſh the natural rights of common ſenſe. This formidable champion has given the laſt fatal blow to languiſhing ſophiſtry; a blow, which, that ſhe may never recover, every man muſt wiſh, who knows the baneful influence of a Hume's dark inventions, and who deſires to counteract it.

To put an end to ſpeculative error, it might perhaps, in ſome degree, be effectual to lay leſs ſtreſs upon metaphyſics in academical education. Thoſe who preſide over our ſeminaries are no leſs liberal than enlightened, and will doubtleſs, if any part of the preſent ſyſtem of inſtruction is trifling or pernicious, renounce it with alacrity. But a deference to their reſpectable opinions renders it reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that an attention to this abſtruſe, though otherwiſe uſeleſs ſcience, may tend to give the young mind a habit of thinking with

with depth and preciſion. As a ſevere diſcipline, it may be advantageous. Many a manœuvre is taught the ſoldier in his courſe of preparation for war, which will ſeldom be uſeful in the field of battle.

They who have no opportunity of being ſerviceable to others, have an unqueſtionable right to ſeek amuſement in abſtruſe ſpeculation. They may puzzle themſelves for diverſion even in metaphyſics. But if, in the courſe of their enquiries, they ſhould fall upon a wonderful diſcovery, which, when divulged, would diſturb the happy ignorance of mankind, let them for once be ſelfiſh, and withhold it from the public.

ESSAY XVII.

ON LATIN VERSE AS AN EXERCISE AT SCHOOLS.

Det primos verſibus annos.

PETRONIUS.

NO part of claſſical education has been more generally cenſured and more firmly adhered to, than that of exerciſing boys in the compoſition of Latin poetry. The trite remark, that a poet is born, and not formed by diſcipline, has been urged againſt it. It has been alledged, that the time beſtowed on it would be more advantageouſly ſpent in the ſtudy of things, and in acquiring a right method of expreſſing our ſentiments in humble proſe. It is abſurd enough, ſay the objectors, to exact a certain portion of Engliſh verſe from

the ſcholar; but to perplex him with Latin verſe, at a time when he might be learning a thouſand uſeful things; what is it but extreme imprudence, countenanced indeed by general practice, but nevertheleſs both culpable and truly ridiculous?

They allow, however, that the cuſtom is general, and of long duration. Surely then that degree of reſpect is due to the general opinion of mankind, and to the wiſdom of our predeceſſors, which leads us to preſume, there muſt have been ſome benefit perceived by experience from an inſtitution thus ancient and univerſal. And it is natural to conſider, whether a few arguments may not be found in favour of a mode ſilently and uniformly purſued, amid the loud clamour every where raiſed againſt it.

The defenders of practices unjuſtly cenſured, often do an injury to their cauſe, by admitting none of the objections to be reaſonable. We will then allow, that to learn to make Latin verſe is to loſe time, when the ſcholar is deſtined

deſtined to ſpend his life in commercial or in mechanical employments. But, at the ſame time, we muſt inſiſt on its utility to the man of independent fortune, to the divine, the lawyer, the phyſician, and perhaps to the accompliſhed military commander.

To all theſe an acquaintance with the claſſics will add an elegance, ſuch as tends to complete their characters as gentlemen, as well as ſcholars. It is the finiſhing poliſh of education, and operates on the mind, like dancing on the perſon, by ſuperadding a graceful habit. But there is no method ſo well calculated to infuſe an intimate knowledge of an author, as to imitate and endeavour to rival his excellences. To write Virgilian verſe with true elegance, it is neceſſary to commit to memory every phraſe; to catch the very ſpirit of Virgil; to mark the varied pauſes of his verſes, the length of his periods, the peculiar grace of his expreſſions; and to give the whole a majeſtic dignity. All theſe requiſites to poetical compoſition in La-

tin, can only be acquired by a frequent and attentive peruſal of the noble Mantuan.

The firſt-fruits of genius produced by the fineſt writers that adorn our annals, were compoſitions in Latin verſe. Milton, at a boyiſh age, wrote it with great elegance. Cowley excelled in it early. Addiſon was much celebrated for his juvenile eſſays in it. Prior began with writing Latin epigrams. All the great men who have been educated at public ſchools, where it is invariably an exerciſe, were, during ſeveral years, obliged to compoſe it as a daily taſk; and though many were never diſtinguiſhed in poetry, yet they derived many advantages from the attempt.

Difficulty is naturally painful; but to overcome it, cauſes a very ſenſible pleaſure, and facilitates future conqueſts, by adding courage. To write Latin verſe, is certainly an arduous taſk to a young boy; but the authority of his maſter, and a ſpirit of emulation, urge him to attempt with alacrity what his own indolence

indolence would have led him to neglect. Long practice gives facility. He finds he has overcome what he once thought inſurmountable. When any new undertaking offers itſelf in future, with a difficult and forbidding aſpect, he is not affrighted; for he recollects, that he has already ſurmounted what he once deemed impracticable. The exertion neceſſary to perform what is not eaſy, has a natural tendency to give the mind freſh vigour.

A ſubject taken from a claſſic, a moral ſentiment, or an ingenious remark, is given to a boy to employ his leiſure during the intervals of ſchool. He is taught, that there muſt be an unity in his deſign; that he muſt invent a thought, on which he is to diſplay, if he can, good ſenſe, and Auguſtan wit, expreſſed in the moſt elegant verſification. This tends to give him a knowledge of things, at the ſame time that it renders it neceſſary to call up to his aſſiſtance all his claſſical phraſeology. He muſt revolve many ideas in his mind before this thought

occurs. In this proceſs he exerciſes the powers of judgment, of diſcrimination, of taſte. He recollects all his reading, he reviews all he has ſeen and heard, he ſearches books on ſimilar topics, and at once improves what he has obtained, and makes new acquiſitions.

He who has been converſant in great ſchools will have ſeen copies of verſes written as the exerciſes of an evening, in which were diſplayed wit, humour, fine language, ingenious turns, harmonious verſe, and very ſhrewd obſervations on men and things. Such were the Luſus Weſtmonaſterienſes; ſuch were many in the Muſæ Etonenſes, and ſuch are thouſands that have never yet been offered to the public view. It is a known truth, that many of the boys, who were engaged in theſe uſeful ſports of a fertile genius, afterwards became diſtinguiſhed members of the literary or the political republic; and they owed much of that good reception which they met with in the world, to the fame of claſſical ſcholarſhip, acquired at their ſchool.

Every

Every liberal ſcholar deſires to extend his views, and to be enabled to derive literary pleaſure from all that is capable of affording it. If he has formed no taſte for modern Latin poetry, he will be a ſtranger to many moſt pleaſing productions. But he cannot have a juſt reliſh for them, unleſs he has a knowledge of proſody, and of their various metres; and of theſe he cannot have a perfect knowledge, ſuch a knowledge as will enable him to judge of their finer graces, without having compoſed Latin poetry.

It is certain, that none of the modern Latiniſts equalled Virgil and Horace, and that the claſſical ſtudent can no where find entertainment ſo unmixed as in their original writings. But the daintieſt fare that an Apicius ever invented, ceaſed to pleaſe when conſtantly repeated. Nor can he be ſaid to have an undiſtinguiſhing taſte, or a coarſe appetite, who ſeeks variety in the writings of the Virgilian Vida, and in the ſweet ſtrains of our own Vincent Bourne. There is often a happy union of the beauties that

diſtinguiſh Ovid, Tibullus, and Martial, in the Carmina Quadrageſimalia. Rapin, Vanier, Buchanan, and Browne, ſeem to have written Latin verſe with an eaſe, which would almoſt lead to a ſuppoſition that Latin was their vernacular language. In miſcellaneous publications of our own and other nations, the man of taſte will find a multitude of poematia, which he may read with pleaſure without danger of corrupting the purity of his ſtyle.

Merely as the means of enjoying a ſweet and innocent pleaſure in greater perfection, of filling up a leiſure hour with an elegant amuſement, the compoſition of Latin verſe may be juſtly recommended to the affluent and the generous youth*. Others, it muſt be owned, will be much better employed in learning their pence-table.

* They whoſe principles are,

——— quærenda pecunia primùm,
Verſus poſt nummos. ———

ESSAY XVIII.

ON NOVEL READING.

——— Peccare docentes
Fallax hiſtorias monet. HOR.

IF it is true, that the preſent age is more corrupt than the preceding, the great multiplication of Novels probably contributes to its degeneracy. Fifty years ago there was ſcarcely a Novel in the kingdom. Romances, indeed, abounded; but they, it is ſuppoſed, were rather favourable to virtue. Their pictures of human nature were not exact, but they were flattering reſemblances. By exhibiting patterns of perfection, they ſtimulated emulation to aim at it. They led the fancy through a beautiful wilderneſs of delights, and they filled the

the heart with pure, manly, bold, and liberal ſentiments.

Even thoſe books which were written with a view to ridicule the more abſurd romantic writers, are themſelves moſt pleaſing romances, and may be read without injury to the morals. Such is the immortal work of Cervantes. Perhaps the ſafeſt books of entertainment are thoſe of decent humour, which excite a laugh, and leave the heart little affected.

Books are more read in youth than in the advanced periods of life. But there are few that are perfectly adapted to youth. They ſhould be entertaining, or they will not be attended to. They ſhould not be profound, for they will not be underſtood. Entertaining books there are; but they were not written ſolely for young people, and are therefore too unguarded in their repreſentations. They do not pay that reverence which Juvenal aſſerts to be due to the puerile age*.

* Maxima debetur pueris reverentia— Juv.

That

That Richardſon's Novels are written with the pureſt intentions of promoting virtue, none can deny. But in the accompliſhment of this purpoſe ſcenes are laid open, which it would be ſafer to conceal, and ſentiments excited, which it would be more advantageous to early virtue not to admit. Dangers and temptations are pointed out; but they are dangers that ſeldom occur, and temptations by which few in compariſon are aſſaulted. It is to be feared, the moral view is rarely regarded by the inexperienced, who naturally pay the greateſt attention to the lively deſcription of love, and its effects; and who, while they read, long to be actors in the ſcenes which they admire.

The genius of Fielding entitles him to a high rank among the claſſics. His works exhibit a ſeries of pictures drawn with all the deſcriptive fidelity of a Hogarth. They are highly entertaining, and will always be read with pleaſure; but they likewiſe diſcloſe ſcenes, which may

may corrupt the mind unſeaſoned by experience.

Smollet undoubtedly poſſeſſed great merit. He would, however, have been more generally read among the polite and refined, if his humour had been leſs coarſe. And it would be adviſeable to defer the peruſal of his works, till the judgment is mature.

Their writings, however, diſplay the beauties of true genius, to compenſate for their faults. But the multitude of memoirs, private hiſtories, and curious anecdotes, imported from our neighbouring land of libertiniſm, have ſeldom any thing to recommend them to peruſal but their profligacy. Yet theſe, adorned with ſpecious titles, and a pert vivacity of language, have found their way to the circulating libraries, and are obtruded on the attention of every age and rank.

The Engliſh preſs has teemed with ſimilar original productions. The effects of that coarſe taſte introduced in the reign of Charles the Second, have ſcarcely yet decreaſed. The ſentimental man-

ner ſeems, however, likely to ſupplant it. But it is matter of doubt, whether even this manner is not equally dangerous. It has given an amiable name to vice, and has obliquely excuſed the extravagance of the paſſions, by repreſenting them as the effect of lovely ſenſibility. The leaſt refined affections of humanity have loſt their indelicate nature, in the ideas of many, when dignified by the epithet of ſentimental; and tranſgreſſions forbidden by the laws of God and man, have been abſurdly palliated, as proceeding from an exceſs of thoſe finer feelings, which vanity has arrogated to itſelf as elegant diſtinctions. A ſoftened appellation has given a degree of gracefulneſs to moral deformity.

The languiſhing and affectedly ſentimental compoſitions formed on the pattern of Sterne, or of other leſs original Noveliſts, not only tend to give the mind a degree of weakneſs, which renders it unable to reſiſt the ſlighteſt impulſe of paſſion, but alſo indirectly inſinuate, that the attempt is unneceſſary

ſelf-denial. What then remains to ſupport the feeble efforts of remaining virtue, but the abſence of temptation?

Such books, however pernicious their tendency, are the moſt eaſily obtained. The prudence of their publiſhers ſuggeſts the expediency of making them conveniently portable. Every corner of the kingdom is abundantly ſupplied with them. In vain is youth ſecluded from the corruptions of the living world. Books are commonly allowed without reſtriction, as innocent amuſements; yet theſe often pollute the heart in the receſſes of the cloſet, inflame the paſſions at a diſtance from temptation, and teach all the malignity of vice in ſolitude.

There is another evil ariſing from a too early attention to Novels. They fix attention ſo deeply, and afford ſo lively a pleaſure, that the mind once accuſtomed to them cannot ſubmit to the painful taſk of ſerious ſtudy. Authentic hiſtory becomes inſipid. The reſerved graces of the chaſte matron Truth, are totally abſorbed in the ſplendor of fiction. The boy

boy who can procure Gil Blas, and the Devil upon Two Sticks, will no longer think his Livy, his Salluſt, his Homer, or his Virgil, pleaſing. He will not ſtudy old Lilly, while he can read Pamela, and Tom Jones.

When the judgment is ripened by reflection, and the morals out of danger, every well-written book will claim attention. The man of application may find agreeable refreſhment, after ſeverer ſtudy, in the amuſing pages of a Fielding; but the fungous growth of the common Novel-wright will be too inſignificant to attract his notice.

The extreme inſipidity of our later productions, it might have been ſuppoſed, would have prevented their reception. But inſipid minds find in them entertainment congenial to their nature. And, indeed, the futility of the modern Novel precludes its power of cauſing any other miſchief, than the conſumption of time that might be more uſefully employed.

If,

If, however, Novels are to be prohibited, in what, it will be aſked, can the young mind employ itſelf during the hours of neceſſary leiſure? There is no doubt, but that, after the ſweetened poiſon is removed, plain and wholeſome food will be reliſhed. The growing mind will always crave nouriſhment, and will gladly ſeek it in true hiſtories, written in a pleaſing and eaſy ſtyle, on purpoſe for its uſe. Voyages and Travels, when not obſcured by ſcientific obſervations, are always delightful to youthful curioſity. From intereſting narratives, like thoſe of Telemachus, and Robinſon Cruſoe, a mind not vitiated by falſe taſte will derive a very ſenſible pleaſure. Let the boy's library conſiſt of Rollin's Hiſtory, Plutarch's Lives, and the Spectators; and, together with the improvement of his morals and underſtanding, he will have it in his power to ſpend his vacant time in ſuch mental amuſements as are truly and permanently delightful.

ESSAY XIX.

ON MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS.

——— ſepulchri
Mitte ſupervacuos honores.

HOR.

IT was the early wiſh of Pope, that, when he died, not a ſtone might tell where he lay. It is a wiſh that will commonly be granted with reluctance. The affection of thoſe we leave behind us, is at a loſs for methods to diſplay its wonted ſolicitude, and ſeeks conſolation under ſorrow in doing honour to all that remains. It is natural that filial piety, parental tenderneſs, and conjugal love, ſhould mark the clay-cold ſpot, where the form ſtill foſtered in the boſom moulders away, with ſome fond me-

morial. And did affection go no farther, who could cenſure? But, in recording the virtues of the departed, either zeal or vanity frequently leads to an exceſs perfectly ludicrous.

A marble monument with a falſe or pompous inſcription is no leſs offenſive to true taſte, than the wooden memorial of the ruſtic, ſculptured with painted bones, and decked out with death's-heads in all the colours of the rainbow. There is an elegance and a claſſical ſimplicity in the turf-clad heap of mould which covers the poor man's grave, though it has nothing to defend it from the inſults of the proud, but a bramble. The primroſe that grows upon it is a better ornament than the gilded lies on the oppreſſor's tombſtone.

The proſtitution of praiſe is injurious to virtue. That imaginary life after death, which conſiſts in a remembrance of our worth cheriſhed in the breaſts of others, though it is deſpiſed by the ſevere reaſoner, has commonly been an additional motive for exertion to the nobleſt

nobleſt ſpirits that have dignified human nature. But when we ſee the ſtudied panegyric engraved on the marble that incloſes the remains of the worthleſs, we deſpiſe the eulogium that mankind are mean enough to beſtow on every one that will pay the price. Thus one powerful motive is loſt, which might operate on the generous in ſtimulating them to a worthy conduct.

On the tombſtones of the truly great, it is right that there ſhould be an inſcription conſiſtent with their dignity. In order to be ſo, it muſt not be prolix. When their names and age make all their ſepulchral hiſtory, it ſeems to be implied that the reſt is ſufficiently known; but when the marble ambitiouſly enlarges on their excellence, it ſeems as if the world wanted the information. It is better that the paſſenger, when he ſees an eminent name, ſhould recollect, while he ſtrikes his penſive boſom, the virtues of its owner, than that his remarks ſhould be anticipated by an obtruding narrative.

The ſtyle of epitaphs uſually adopted has been too diffuſe. The noble antients, thoſe patterns of unaffected magnificence, conſulted real dignity in the brevity of their epitaphs. As an hiſtorical monument, at an age when printing was unknown, they ſometimes engraved the exploits of a warrior on the marble; but in general they recorded little more than the name of the defunct. The Grecian muſe ſometimes poured the ſweet melody of verſe at the ſhrine of a poet or hero; but ſhe never condeſcended to mean flattery, nor diſplayed the bloated oſtentation of modern panegyric.

There are many excellent epitaphs in the Engliſh language, both in verſe and proſe. In the diffuſe kind, that on the infamous Chartres is a fine model. Weſtminſter Abbey exhibits many inſcriptions written with manly, forcible, energetic elegance. The great fault has been, a redundance of epithets in the ſuperlative degree.

We

We have alſo many fine poetical epitaphs. Thoſe of Dryden and Pope are the moſt deſervedly celebrated. In general, the metrical are inferior to the proſaic. Some of the beſt are crowded with antitheſis, a fault which renders them inferior to the Grecian; and ſome of the worſt, many of which are found in the moſt public cœmeteries, ſtand forth a diſgrace to national taſte. The love of rhyme deſcends to the loweſt ranks. The pariſh-clerk is commonly called upon for a ſtave or two of verſes, by every ruſtic that can raiſe a poſt to the memory of his relation; and there are few church-yards in the kingdom, where the favourite ſtanza "Afflictions ſore long time I bore," does not occur more than once.

But our epitaphs are moſt commonly written in Latin; probably becauſe it is intelligible to foreigners, and is capable of more elegance and elevation. Our country has produced many writers remarkable for beautiful latinity: accordingly we find inſcriptions in every part

of the kingdom abounding with claſſical expreſſions. The misfortune has been, that our epitaphs have encroached on the province of biography; and real dignity has been loſt in the affectation of it, in a tedious and circumſtantial detail. The reader is tired, before he has obtained a clear idea of the character deſcribed. His eyes have failed, even if his attention perſevered. The epitaph on the pious Nelſon, for inſtance, conſiſts of above eighty lines.

The punning and epigrammatic epitaph was much in faſhion a century or two ago. That on fair Roſamond might have been replete with tender ſentiment, but it is now a wretched* diſtich of puns and monkiſh rhymes. This ſpecies is at preſent quite exploded, and little

* Hic jacet in tumbâ roſa mundi, non roſa munda,
Non redolet, ſed olet, quæ redolere ſolet.

That on RICHARD LATEWAR is well known, and exhibits a curious ſpecimen of the prevailing taſte. It begins thus,

A ſero bello dives duruſque vocatus.

need

need be ſaid to prove its great impropriety. Falſe wit is always miſplaced, but the true ſeems to be excluded from the epitaph. Who can bear buffoonery on a tombſtone? The tender and elegiac, or the manly and ſevere ſtyle, ſeems to be beſt adapted to the monumental inſcription. But neither the pathetic nor ſublime is compatible with the ludicrous.

The authors of our epitaphs are ſeldom known. One of the beſt that I can recollect, was the claſſical Bourne. The few he has left us are maſterpieces. That in Weſtminſter Abbey, on Dickinſon the architect, is truly ſublime†.

In our iſland there has certainly been no dearth of genius for monumental inſcriptions; though there is one circumſtance which might induce a foreigner to think the contrary. The famous Dutcheſs of Marlborough is ſaid to have offered, without ſucceſs, five hundred

† H. S. E.
GULIELMUS DICKINSON Arm.
Architectus;
Qualis! ſuſpice.

pounds for an epitaph adequate to the dignity of her Duke. Her grace, whoſe taſte was not very juſt, would probably have expected a hiſtory long enough to cover with inſcription the unwieldy pile of ſtones called Blenheim Houſe. I cannot help thinking, that a tedious epitaph, minutely relating his atchievements, would rather leſſen than exalt him in the eyes of mankind. Would not Alexander the Great have appeared leſs, if it had been written on his tomb, that the ſon of Philip was reputed to have been, in his day, the wiſeſt general, the boldeſt hero, the moſt accompliſhed man; in ſhort, if all thoſe inflated ſuperlatives had been uſed, which gothic ideas of grandeur have now introduced?

ESSAY XX.

ON THE CHARACTER OF ATTICUS.

FEW have approached ſo nearly to a perfect character as Atticus. To the nobleſt inſtances of exalted wiſdom and liberality, he added a peculiar elegance of life, ſeldom attained to even by thoſe who probably poſſeſs a taſte for its beauty.

But his reputation has of late been ſullied by detraction. The Abbe St. Real, in the wantonneſs of idle ingenuity, has attempted to derogate from his character, by diſputing the veracity of his biographer Cornelius Nepos. Unluckily for him, the principal paſſage he has quoted from Cicero to con-

vict the hiſtorian of falſehood is manifeſtly corrupt, and, when reſtored to its obvious ſenſe, proves nothing to the purpoſe. The Abbe, however, takes upon him to repreſent this amiable man as a time-ſerver, and an artful politician, whoſe wiſdom conſiſted in little elſe than a ſagacious attention to his own ſafety.

The penetrating Middleton has alſo ſpoken leſs favourably of the friend of Cicero, than might have been expected. He inſinuates, that his Epicurean principles taught him a ſelfiſh caution, totally incompatible with the cordiality of friendſhip. To this prudent, yet not very honourable ſelf-regard, he attributes it, that not one letter of Atticus was publiſhed, though not leſs than ſixteen books of Cicero to Atticus have deſcended to the preſent times.

There is, it muſt be owned, on a ſlight review, a great appearance of inſincerity in the conduct of Atticus. But St. Real has too haſtily rejected the honourable teſtimony which Nepos has

borne in his favour; and Middleton ſeems to have been too much prejudiced againſt him, by a ſingle paſſage of Seneca. Seneca aſſerted, that if Cicero had not drawn Atticus into notice, he would have remained unknown. This, however, may be true, without diminiſhing his merit. How could he have come down to poſterity, but together with the fame of his illuſtrious friend; ſince he took not an active part in politics, which might have given him a place in the page of hiſtory, and erected no literary monument for the preſervation of his own glory?

If, therefore, the character of his contemporary Cornelius Nepos is eſtabliſhed as an hiſtorian, the fame of Atticus remains undiminiſhed by the cavils of modern enquirers.

In anſwer to the aſperſion, that Nepos was a mean writer, and was little regarded by his own age, it muſt be affirmed that he was, as we are told by Gellius, the familiar friend of Cicero. It is ſaid alſo, that a ſtatue was erected to him by

by his countrymen of Verona*. If there are defects in any of the writings that paſs under his name, they are attributed to the interpolations of Æmilius Probus. His Atticus is allowed to be his own, and a maſterpiece of ſweet and poliſhed † compoſition. Cicero ſpeaks highly of him, and he is particularly honoured by Catullus and both the Plinies. He lived at the ſame time with Atticus, and, had he aſſerted any notorious untruths, would ſoon have been refuted by the general voice of living witneſſes, who are ſeldom diſpoſed to be raſhly credulous to the voice of praiſe.

But, ſetting aſide authority, it may be ſaid, that the uncontroverted matter of fact, the intimate connection of Atticus with oppoſite parties, with Cæſar and with Pompey, with Anthony and with Brutus, with Cicero, Clodius, and Horten-

* Onuphr. Panavini Catalogus illuſtrium Scriptorum Veronenſium.

† Limatiſſimus Scriptor. Scioppius de Stylo.

ſius,

ſius, is a proof of uncommon management, not to ſay duplicity. From this fact I would deduce a different inference. His friendſhip with the greateſt men of his times, whatever were their political diviſions, does honour to his integrity. Had he concerned himſelf with faction, no cunning could have ſecured him from the hatred of ſome of the parties, and a ſubſequent proſcription. Had he been mean, baſe, artful, he would have been unanimouſly deſpiſed by all. They who differed in every thing elſe, would have agreed in expoſing one whoſe villany deſerved contempt, and whoſe influence was not great enough to juſtify connivance. The truth ſeems to be, that he was ſuperior to the little views of party. His general philanthropy was ſtronger than his particular attachments, and in his warm regard for the excellence of his friends, he overlooked the failings that cauſed their animoſity. Though he lived at a diſtance from the capital, and choſe not to exert his influence, if he poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed any, yet ſuch was his perſonal dignity, that, in his intercourſe with Cicero and the greateſt men of his times, he never appeared in the light of an inferior. They ſeem indeed to have treated him with an unuſual deference.

That he cultivated a friendſhip with them, and did them every good office that humanity directed by judgment could ſuggeſt, is true. But we have it on record, that he courted not the fortunate alone. To thoſe who wanted his protection, and were leaſt likely to repay it, he was moſt ready to afford it.

Devoted to letters, and to all the ſtudies that refine and elevate the liberal mind, he was idolized at Athens, where he found a ſweet aſylum from the tumult of faction. His ſituation in this place was truly enviable. In the centre of taſte and learning, with a diſcernment that enabled him to ſelect and reliſh the beſt of their productions, beloved by all around, and even courted by the great, he ſpent his time at Athens, in all the elegant tranquillity of the refined Epicurus.

curus. His departure from it was publicly lamented, and the regret of that diſcerning people reflects an honour on him, far greater than an ovation.

Though a man of taſte, of letters, of important connections, he was yet enabled to give attention to domeſtic œconomy. His family regulations were peculiar indeed, but ſuch as became a philoſopher. All his ſervants were qualified to read to him, and to perform the office of amanuenſes. He was elegant, ſays Nepos, not magnificent; ſplendid, not profuſe. The unaffected beauty of delicate neatneſs was his object, not the oſtentation of opulence.

A very diſtinguiſhing and honourable part of his character, was his utter deteſtation of deceit. He abhorred a lie. A circumſtance which renders the charge of time-ſerving duplicity improbable. That he appeared leſs affected with his friend Cicero's misfortunes, is not ſo much to be attributed to inſincerity, as to ſome apparently weak conduct in Cicero himſelf.

The

The goodneſs of his diſpoſition appeared in the conſtancy of his attachments, and in the delight he felt in acts of beneficence; but it ſhone nowhere more amiably than in his behaviour as a ſon and a brother. His mother lived to the age of ninety; and he uſed to mention with pleaſure, that he never was involved with her in one moment's diſagreement. He gloried in living on the moſt affectionate terms with his ſiſter.

He died in a good old age. But it is to be lamented, that after a long life, as perfect as reaſon unaſſiſted could render it, he precipitated his death by refuſing ſuſtenance, in order to avoid the recurrence of a painful diſeaſe. He acted conſiſtently with the principles of Epicurus, who taught that pain was the greateſt evil. A mind like his would have been the firſt to have refuted ſuch errors, had he lived in a later age, and been the diſciple of a greater than Epicurus.

Delineated by the pencil of Cornelius Nepos, he ſhines forth a beautiful portrait.

trait. Nor can I ſee the uſe of thoſe minute enquiries, which tend to lower an elevated character. The more examples of human excellence, the more honourable and advantageous to human nature. Truth, indeed, in all caſes ſhould be carefully inveſtigated; but when it already appears to be ſufficiently eſtabliſhed on the ſide of virtue, that reſtleſſneſs of learned reſearch, which ſeeks to ſap its foundations, is not only impertinent, but criminal.

ESSAY XXI.

ON BIOGRAPHY.

Beatos puto quibus deorum munere datum eſt aut facere ſcribenda aut ſcribere legenda: beatiſſimos vero, quibus utrumque.

PLINIUS.

AMONG the many arguments advanced to recommend the ſtudy of hiſtory, it has been ſaid, that it teaches wiſdom without the danger of experience, and, by pointing out the paths of thoſe who have gone before us, facilitates the journey of life. Hiſtory has been called philoſophy teaching by examples. But, after all, it muſt be allowed, that civil hiſtory is leſs capable of regulating moral than political conduct. The deſcriptions of battles, the accounts of debates, the characters of

kings and heroes, contain very little that can regulate the actions of the private and more numerous ranks in the community.

But an exact and authentic account of individuals, who have greatly excelled in any of the departments of active or contemplative life, ſeems to be a mode of inſtruction beſt ſuited to an animal, like man, prone to imitation. When a ſingle character is diſtinctly delineated, we can purſue the outline, with an eaſe equal to that with which the painter copies from the original picture placed before his eyes. We have the αυτος εφη, the expreſs authority of the pattern we have choſen, to direct us in every emergency, and can tread with implicit confidence in the footſteps of the moſt diſtinguiſhed men, without the ſuſpenſe of deliberate ſelection. The ſtory of an individual, as it is a* ſingle object, is comprehended more

* Δια τι ποτε των ιστοριων ηδιον ακουομεν των περι ΕΝ ευτυχηκοτων η των περι πολλα πραγματευομενων, &c.
ARISTOT. Prob.

fully, and attended to with greater pleaſure.

For theſe reaſons, Biography appears to be more inſtructive than civil hiſtory, though it has commonly been written with a leſs degree of attention. Herodotus is all ſweetneſs. Thucydides exhibits the ſolid and auſtere beauties. Xenophon, the attic bee, preſents us with a ſtyle flowing with honey. Livy diſplays a moſt maſterly compoſition, and paints in glowing colours all that he relates. Salluſt rivals his Grecian maſter; and in modern times, Guicciardin, Hume, Robertſon, and Gibbon, have exhibited in their writings the genuine graces of the hiſtoric muſe. But among Biographers, ſcarcely any can juſtly claim a rank with the firſt writers of the golden age.

As a diligent collector of facts, as a warm friend to virtue, as an entertaining narrator, I venerate the name of Plutarch. His writings bear evident marks of extenſive reading, and communicate much multifarious knowledge. Theodore

dore Gaza has ſaid, that if all books were loſt, and he might recover one, it ſhould be Plutarch. He is indeed an invaluable treaſure of antient learning; for he ſelected paſſages from books now totally loſt, and inſerted them very liberally in his works. Add to this, that he is an admirable moraliſt. But his judgment ſeems not to have been always ſtrong enough to manage the unwieldy maſs of learning he had aſſembled*. He indulged the weakeſt ſuperſtition. He is for ever relating ſtories, which Horace calls ANILES, old wives tales. Merely for an oſtentatious diſplay of erudition, he digreſſes without limits. The idea of parallels was excellent; and he has ſometimes drawn them admirably, though, as the critics ſay, not without a partiality to his own countrymen. They have convicted him of this unphiloſophical attachment in the compariſon between Tully and Demoſ-

* Melior quam acutior doctor.
LIPSIUS.

thenes, Cato and Ariſtides, Sylla and Lyſander, Marcellus and Pelopidas.

They who are willing to allow him every other merit, give up his ſtyle as harſh and inelegant*. Though certainly an uſeful, he cannot be eſteemed a fine writer; and whatever he poſſeſſes, his inſtance does not refute the aſſertion, that biographical has never yet equalled civil hiſtory.

The long and diffuſe accounts of Plutarch have been compared to coloſſal ſtatues; the conciſe hiſtories of Cornelius Nepos, to medallions. Cornelius Nepos has a claim from the age he flouriſhed in, from his language, and from his fidelity to the rank of a claſſic; but by no means to the firſt rank. It is ſuſpected by many, that as Trogus was epitomized by Juſtin, ſo Nepos was abbreviated by a writer, who flouriſhed un-

* Tamen diſſimulare non poſſum dictionem ejus gravem quidem eſſe, ſed duriuſculam videri.
VOSSIUS.

Plutarchi oratio aſpera et moroſa.
PETRUS VICTOR.

der

der Theodoſius in the declenſion of polite literature. The life of Atticus, if we may pronounce from internal evidence, continues unaltered, and reflects great honour on its writer, as a fine copy of a beautiful original.

Diogenes Laertius choſe a ſubject well adapted to diſplay ingenuity. The lives of the wiſeſt men whom the world ever produced, if well written, would have been a moſt valuable acquiſition to antient learning. But, with a fine ſubject, he was a poor writer.

It is to be wiſhed, that Tacitus had more frequently exerciſed his talents in biography. His life of Agricola is, perhaps, the beſt biographical work that was ever compoſed. It is written in that beautiful energetic ſtyle, which characteriſes this ſpirited hiſtorian; and it is more pleaſing than his other works, becauſe it exhibits not a deformed portrait. Mallet's Life of Bacon is a good imitation of it.

Suetonius probably drew his pictures from the life, and they are loathſome to

behold. They are, however, uſeful to the philoſopher, as they enable him to form a more complete idea of human nature in all the gradations of degeneracy and perfection. They are alſo well written. Conciſe, nervous, ſimple, they pleaſe by their perſpicuity, and freedom from ambitious ornament. To the honour of their author it muſt be ſaid, that he appears to have advanced nothing through flattery or reſentment, nor to have ſuppreſſed any thing through fear, but to have paid an undaunted regard to veracity. Eraſmus obſerves, that he wrote as freely as the emperors whom he deſcribed had lived.

It is matter of ſurpriſe and regret, that we have not more biographers. Thouſands and tens of thouſands, eminent in every accompliſhment, whoſe examples might have inſtructed the world, are become as though they had never been. In our own country, it is true, there are many biographical compilations, but they are for the moſt part incomplete. Wood's Athenæ, though a book that does honour

nour to our moſt celebrated univerſity, has no merit as a compoſition. Fuller's and Birch's works are leſs circumſtantial, and leſs read by the common people, than the Lives of the Highwaymen.

Worth is often unknown, or known imperfectly, till after death; till that period, when it is too late to learn particular circumſtances with accuracy. Many of our ſecond-rate authors and actors in every department of life, though richly deſerving a place in the annals of fame, are recorded only in thoſe volumes, where to be born and die, as Pope ſays, makes all the hiſtory.

To preſerve their actions from oblivion and miſrepreſentation, ſome writers have been their own biographers. The taſk requires great delicacy. The very attempt implies a conſiderable degree of ſelf-value; but it has been juſtified by Thúanus and Hume*.

* Plerique ſuam ipſi vitam narrare fiduciam potiùs morum quam arrogantiam arbitrati ſunt; nec id Rutilio et Scauro citra fidem aut obtrectationi fuit. TAC.

There

There has appeared in our times and country a biographical work on an extenſive plan. The firſt edition of the Biographia Britannica was well deſigned, yet unequally and, upon the whole, indifferently executed. Many diſtinguiſhed lives are totally omitted; many inſignificant lives tediouſly deſcribed. Though there is ſometimes much labour and ſagacity exerted, yet there are few maſterly remarks. Moſt of the articles were furniſhed by writers of no great repute; and there was every reaſon for the new edition now undertaken. If I might preſume to ſuggeſt an improvement, I would adviſe, that elegantly engraved heads ſhould be prefixed to every life, whenever they can be procured; and that the materials ſhould not be collected from books only, but from the traditionary reports, and the manuſcript letters remaining in the families of deſcendants. The names of the living perſons who communicate the hints ſhould be added, both to ſecure and to confirm their authenticity.

ESSAY XXII.

ON HOSPITALITY, AND THE LITTLE CIVILITIES OF LIFE.

Leniores virtutes. Cic.

IN the days of Horace*, our countrymen were reputed to be ſavage in their behaviour to ſtrangers. Though in the preſent age the charge would be unjuſt, yet it muſt be owned, that there is a reſerve in the manner of an unadulterated Engliſhman, which ſeems to confirm the opinion, that he inherits a portion of the unſocial ſpirit of his anceſtors. Whatever may be his natural propenſity, it is certain, that, in the liberal intercourſe and comprehenſive education that prevail in the preſent times, there

* Viſam Britannos hoſpitibus feros. Hor.

is ſcarcely any country in the world where a more cordial hoſpitality is diſplayed, than in England.

The days of Elizabeth have been extolled as the days of genuine hoſpitality. The doors were thrown open, and, at the ſound of the dinner-bell, all the neighbouring country crowded to the ſmoking table. Theſe were times indeed, ſays the railer againſt modern refinement. Yet it may be doubted, whether this indiſcriminate hoſpitality was laudable. There was ſomething generous and magnificent in the idea; it gave the nobles of the land the influence of kings over their neighbourhood; it contributed to extend a general freedom of ſpirit. Yet if its motive and its moral effect are conſidered, it will appear juſtly exploded. It proceeded from the love of power and from oſtentation, and it produced gluttony, drunkenneſs, and all their conſequent vices.

Conſidered in a charitable light, as affording food to the hungry, it will be found a leſs uſeful mode than the modern

inſtitutions.

inſtitutions. It did not ſelect its objects: it conſidered not the degrees of indigence or of deſert. The conſequence was, that it increaſed indigence, and leſſened deſert; for experience has proved, that unneceſſary alms, however amiable the motive of them, do a real injury where they mean a benefit. They promote idleneſs, by teaching poverty to rely on other aid than the efforts of honeſt induſtry.

The great number of houſes for the reception of travellers in every part of the kingdom, and the expeditious modes of travelling, which render delay unneceſſary, have contributed to reſtrain that general hoſpitality which opened the door to all who came. But there never was a time when judicious civility of all kinds was more liberally ſhewn to ſtrangers, than the preſent. And whatever the old Romans or the modern Gauls may aſſert of Britiſh ferocity of manners, no Italian or Frenchman of character ever came to our* ſeparated ſhore,

* —— Toto diviſos orbe Britannos. Juv.

without

without having felt, though he may not have expreſſed it, delight at his hearty reception, and regret on his departure.

It ſeems probable that hoſpitality keeps pace with civilization. As the minds of a people are enlarged by improvements in knowledge, and communication with their neighbours, the ſelfiſh and moroſe affections gradually loſe ground. In ſeveral parts of Europe, where ſocial improvements have not yet reached, the traveller is either conſidered as lawful prey, or elſe totally diſregarded*. On the other hand, we find the natives of the Society Iſles, ſeparated as they are from all the reſt of the world, and by no means far removed from the ſavage ſtate, remarkably hoſpitable. Though fear might cauſe their civility to Europeans, yet it was not the ſole motive of it; for we find their good offices, after all apprehenſions were removed, evidently proceeding from the

* —— The rude Carinthian boor
Againſt the houſeleſs ſtranger ſhuts the door.
GOLDSMITH.

tendereſt

tendereſt and moſt generous affection. On the firſt appearance of the Engliſh on their coaſts, they naturally conſidered them as enemies, and boldly oppoſed their invaſion. Many of them exhibited acts of heroiſm, in defence of their country, ſcarcely exceeded in the annals of antiquity. But no ſooner was the branch of peace held out, than they received their wonderful viſitors with open arms; with a humanity that reflects diſgrace on the maritime villages of Europe, where a ſhipwrecked fellow-creature and fellow-countryman has been deſtroyed for the ſake of plundering his veſſel. In other iſlands diſcovered by our circumnavigators, we find, that no kindneſs could mitigate the ferocity of the rude child of nature. The hoſpitality of barbarians, like all virtues that proceed not from principle, but from humour and accidental cauſes, is of little value. A clearer light than the light of nature is neceſſary to give a ſteady operation to the workings of humanity.

The

The idea which chriſtianity has ſuggeſted of the relation in which all men ſtand to each other, is wonderfully adapted to promote univerſal hoſpitality. When we conſider all men as brothers, we ſhall naturally receive the ſtranger within our gates, with cordial kindneſs, as a relation whom we have never yet ſeen before, and to whom we wiſh to diſplay ſome ſignal of our love. It is indeed true, that many who are truly good, do not reduce this generous idea to practice. The reaſon ſeems to be, that they ſuffer the attachments of domeſtic life, and the connections of conſanguinity, to engroſs the whole of their affections. Add to this, that the actual exerciſe of beneficence requires ſomething leſs in our power than benevolence.

However juſt the complaints of the miſery of life, great occaſions for the diſplay of beneficence and liberality do not often occur. But there is an hourly neceſſity for the little kind offices of mutual civility. At the ſame time that they

they give pleaſure to others, they add to our own happineſs and improvement. Habitual acts of kindneſs have a powerful effect in ſoftening the heart. An intercourſe with poliſhed and humane company tends to improve the diſpoſition, becauſe it requires a conformity of manners. And it is certain, that a ſenſe of decorum, and of a proper external behaviour, will reſtrain thoſe whoſe natural temper would otherwiſe break out in acrimonious and petulant converſation. Even the affectation of philanthrophy will in time realiſe it. The pleaſure reſulting from an act of kindneſs naturally excites a wiſh to repeat it; and the general eſteem which the character of benevolence procures, is ſufficient to induce thoſe to wiſh for it, who act only from the motives of intereſt.

Placed in a world where natural evil abounds, we ought to render it ſupportable to each other, as far as human endeavours can avail. All that can add a ſweet ingredient to the bitter cup

muſt be infuſed. Amid the multitude of thorns, every flower that will grow muſt be cultivated with care. But neither pomp nor power are of themſelves able to alleviate the load of life. The heart requires to be ſoothed by ſympathy. A thouſand little attentions from all around us are neceſſary to render our days agreeable. The appearance of neglect in any of thoſe with whom we are connected, chills our boſom with chagrin, or raiſes the fire of reſentment. Nothing therefore ſeems ſo likely to enſure happineſs, as our mutual endeavours to promote it. Our ſingle endeavours, originating and terminating in ourſelves, are uſually unſucceſsful. Providence has taken care to ſecure that intercourſe which is neceſſary to the exiſtence of ſociety, by rendering it the greateſt ſweetener of human life.

By reciprocal attentions, we are enabled to become beneficent without expence. A ſmile, an affable addreſs, a look of approbation, are often capable of giving a greater

a greater pleaſure than pecuniary benefits can beſtow. The mere participation of the ſtudies and amuſements of others, at the ſame time that it gratifies ourſelves, is often an act of real humanity; becauſe others would not enjoy them without companions. A friendly viſit in a ſolitary hour, is often a greater act of kindneſs than a valuable preſent.

It is really matter of ſurpriſe, that the great ſhould ever be unpopular in their neighbourhood. They muſt know the value of popularity, and ſurely nothing is more eaſily obtained by a ſuperior. Their notice confers honour; and the aſpiring heart of man is always delighted with diſtinction. A gracious look from them diffuſes happineſs. But it is unfortunate, that pride or inadvertence often prevent men from acting the godlike part of making others happy, even when they might do it without inconvenience.

ESSAY XXIII.

ON THE MERIT OF ILLUSTRIOUS BIRTH.

Εις δε ευγενειαν, ολιγ' εχω φρασαι καλα,
Ο μεν γαρ εσθλος ευγενης εμοιγ' ανηρ
Ο δ' ου δικαιος, καν αμεινονος πατρος
Ζηνος πεφυκη, δυσγενης ειναι δοκει.

EURIPIDES.

——— Sanctus haberi,
Juſtitiæque tenax factis dictiſque mereris?
AGNOSCO PROCEREM.

JUVENAL.

THERE is ſcarcely any truth of which the world has been more frequently reminded by the moraliſts, than the unreaſonableneſs of that veneration which is paid to birth. They have been told, that virtue alone is true nobility; but though they have acknowledged

ledged the aſſertion to be founded in reaſon, they have continued, with uniform perſeverance, in the ſame error. The luminous glory of an illuſtrious anceſtor, ſeems to have diffuſed a brilliancy over a long line of deſcendants, too opaque of themſelves to emit any original irradiations.

Gratitude, which firſt raiſed a benefactor to a diſtinguiſhed rank in civil honours, is willing to continue its returns of kindneſs to his immediate offspring. This predilection ſoon leads to the accumulation of honours and poſſeſſions; till the incenſe originally offered, becauſe it was deſerved, is laviſhed at the ſhrine of opulence.

Subordination is, indeed, eſſential to ſociety. The order of nobles, as hereditary guardians of the laws, is found an uſeful political eſtabliſhment; and none ſeem ſo well adapted to ſupply it, as they who have been raiſed to eminence by their anceſtors, and who poſſeſs a territorial patrimony in the land which they are to protect. All that is contended

for is, that the recommendation of birth may not ſet aſide or depreciate real merit, the praiſe of learning, and the intrinſic value of virtuous exertions.

It is a remarkable circumſtance in the hiſtory of mankind, that ſome of the beſt books have been written, and ſome of the greateſt achievements performed, by thoſe whoſe blood was truly plebeian. The politeſt and genteeleſt books, whether the ſentiments or the ſtyle be conſidered, have been produced by ſlaves, or the deſcendants of ſlaves. Horace, Phædrus, and Terence, wrote in a ſtyle which muſt have been the ſtandard of a court, to an intercourſe with which they were by no means entitled by their extraction. The founders of the moſt diſtinguiſhed families emerged from the middle and the lower claſſes, by the ſuperior vigour of their natural abilities, or by extraordinary efforts, aſſiſted by fortune. And unleſs the adventitious circumſtances of wealth can effect a change in the conſtituent principles of the mind and body, there is no real ſuperiority

periority derived in a boaſted pedigree of Tudors and Plantagenets.

And yet there have appeared writers who have ventured to maintain, that the minds of the nobility ſeem to be caſt in a finer mould, and to have an elegance inherent in their original conſtitution. According to this hypotheſis, we muſt go on to ſuppoſe, that the mind of a commoner, exalted to the higher order of ſenators, catches this elegance by the contagion of inviſible effluvia. On his creation he undergoes a kind of new birth, and puts off the lunæ which encumbered him in the lower regions. Thus are all the occult perfections of noble blood to be infuſed by the mandate of a monarch. But no, ſaid Maximilian to a man who aſked to be ennobled by him, though I can give you riches and a title, I cannot make you noble.

In truth, there is many a nobleman, according to the genuine idea of nobility, at the loom, at the plough, and in the ſhop. This genuine idea contains

in it generoſity, courage, ſpirit, and benevolence, the qualities of a warm and open heart, totally unconnected with the accidental advantages of riches and honour; and many an Engliſh ſailor has poſſeſſed more of the real hero than a lord of the admiralty.

If indeed there is any real difference in the quality of their blood, the advantage is probably on the ſide of the inferior claſſes. Their indigence and their manual employments require temperance and exerciſe, the beſt purifiers of the animal juices. But the indolence which wealth excuſes, and the pleaſures which faſhionable life admits without reſtraint, have a natural tendency to vitiate the body as well as the mind. And among the many privileges inherited by him who boaſts nobility in his veins, he commonly receives the ſeeds of the moſt painful and the impureſt diſeaſes. He diſplays, indeed, a coronet on his coat of arms, and he has a long pedigree to peruſe with ſecret ſatisfaction; but he has often a gout or a ſcrophula, which

make him wiſh to exchange every drop derived from his Norman anceſtors, for the pure tide that warms a peaſant's boſom.

The ſpirit of freedom, moral, mental, and political, which prevails in England, precludes that unreaſonable attachment to birth, which, in the countries of deſpotiſm, tends to elevate the noble to a rank ſuperior to humanity. In our neighbour's land, the region of external elegance united with real meanneſs, the implicit veneration paid to birth, adds to the weight of legal oppreſſion. A Frenchman of the plebeian order attends to a Count or a Marquis with all the ſilent ſubmiſſion of idolatry; on the contrary, there is no doubt but that an Engliſh Gondolier would box with the beſt Lord in the land, if he were affronted, without the leaſt regard for his ſtar and ribbon. It would indeed be an additional pleaſure to the natural delight of conqueſt, to have bruiſed my Lord. Even the more refined and enlightened do not idoliſe illuſtrious

birth,

birth. Wealth appears to be the object of more univerſal veneration. Noble blood and noble titles, without an eſtate to ſupport them, meet with great compaſſion indeed, but with little reſpect; nor is the man who has raiſed himſelf to eminence, and who behaves well in it, neglected and deſpiſed becauſe he derives no luſtre from his forefathers. In a commercial country, where gain is the general object, they who have been moſt ſucceſsful in its purſuit will be revered by many, whatever was their origin. In France, where honour is purſued from the monarch to the cleanſer of a jakes, the diſtinction of birth, even with extreme poverty, is enviable. The brother of a Marquis would rather ſtarve on a beggarly penſion, than pollute himſelf with a trade by which he might acquire the revenues of a German kingdom. In our land of good ſenſe, this folly is loſing ground; and the younger brothers of noble houſes often think it no diſgrace

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to rival the heir in a princely fortune acquired by honourable merchandiſe.

As the world becomes more enlightened, the exorbitant value which has been placed on things not really valuable will decreaſe. Of all the effects of man's capricious admiration, there are few leſs rational than the preference of illuſtrious deſcent to perſonal merit, of diſeaſed and degenerate nobility to health, to courage, to learning, and to virtue. Of all the objects of purſuit which are not in our own power*, the want of diſtinguiſhed birth may moſt eaſily be diſpenſed with, by thoſe who poſſeſs a ſolid judgment of that which makes and keeps us happy. There may be ſome reaſon to repine at the want of wealth and fame; but he who has derived from his parent health, vigour, and all the powers of perception, need not lament that he is unnoticed at the herald's office.

* Τα ουκ εφ' ημιν.

It has been obſerved, that virtue appears more amiable, when accompanied with beauty; it may be added, that it is more uſeful when recommended to the notice of mankind by the diſtinction of an honourable anceſtry. It is greatly to be wiſhed, that the nobly born would deſerve the reſpect which the world pays them with alacrity, by employing their influence to benevolent purpoſes, which can at all times be accompliſhed, even when the patriotic exertions of the field and cabinet are precluded.

ESSAY XXIV.

ON LORD CHANCELLOR BACON.

NO acts are ſo truly our own as thoſe of the underſtanding. The world has long agreed in admiration of Alexander, Cæſar, and Charles of Sweden; and the remark of Cicero ſeems not to have occurred to them, that the glory of a general is in great meaſure derived from the merit of thoſe who obey him, and that a thouſand contingencies muſt conſpire, to give efficacy to the beſt concerted plans of military operation.

But the works of genius are commonly produced in ſolitude. The mind forms its own deſign, and purſues within

in

in itſelf all the methods that conduce to its accompliſhment. Fortune has little influence in retarding or promoting its purpoſes. If, then, the proportion of glory which is to redound to an individual, may be eſtimated by perſonal merit, independently of external aid and accidental events, the triumphs of ingenuity muſt be held more honourable than the triumphs of valour, and a conqueſt of the intellectual world more worthy the dignified page of hiſtory, than the ſubjection of the terraqueous globe. Such a conqueror is the great Bacon; and when the world ſhall have corrected its erroneous judgment, he will be placed in a rank ſuperior to the ſon of Philip.

A popular hiſtorian of England has, however, depreciated the merit of this glory of our nation. Hume has plainly pronounced him inferior to the Florentine philoſopher Galilæo; and he attributes the great applauſe that has been paid to him, to the illiberal partiality of our national ſpirit. The ſug-

geſtions of this ſpirit will prompt many to attribute his detraction to national envy.

The teſtimony of foreigners, who cannot be biaſſed by this prejudice, is truly honourable to our great philoſophers. Baco Verulamius, for ſo they call him, is more frequently mentioned, and with higher applauſe, than the ingenious philoſopher of Italy. Great as have been the praiſes beſtowed on Bacon in his own country, they have never reached the high encomiums of foreign univerſities.

It was the great miſtake of Ariſtotle, to have accommodated his phyſics to his logic, inſtead of rendering his logic ſubſervient to his phyſics, and, as the critics have obſerved, by inverting the natural order of things, to have ſubjected the end to the means. To remove this error, our philoſopher invented his NOVUM ORGANUM, in which he teaches to reaſon by induction; a more effectual method of eliciting truth, than the antiquated and trifling forms of a perfect

perfect ſyllogiſm. This work is acknowledged to be his maſterpiece; and the beneficial effect it has had in aſcertaining ſcience, by reducing it to the teſt of experiment, is alone ſufficient to entitle him to all the fame he enjoys.

His predominant excellence in promoting ſcience, ſeems almoſt to have abſorbed his glory as a moraliſt. But his genius, formed to penetrate into all ſubjects on which it directed its beams, made acute diſcoveries in common life and common manners, which, it might be ſuppoſed, would be leſs likely to occur to the deep ſpeculator than to the man of buſineſs. There is a ſolidity of remark in all his moral writings, which enables the reader to ſelect ſomething uſeful on every peruſal. It is this original and ſubſtantial excellence, which gives a grace to his writings, not to be deformed by a ſtyle by no means uniformly elegant; though Sir Richard Baker, whoſe taſte, however, was not equal to his knowledge, aſſerts of it, that Bacon has

ſometimes

that Bacon has ſometimes written in ſo ſweet a ſtyle, that, like manna, it pleaſes every palate.

Men of profound ſcience commonly excel more in judgment than in wit. But Bacon is acknowledged to have diſplayed a very conſiderable degree of wit in his moral lucubrations. Rapin ſays, there is more of it in his ethics, than in any of his writings; for which, I think, a reaſon may eaſily be aſſigned. Obſervations on men and manners admit a playful ingenuity of thought; but the features of ſevere ſcience are not to be relaxed by the ſallies of a ſportive fancy.

I have often regretted, that ſo ſagacious an underſtanding was not more frequently employed in ſpeculations more generally uſeful, than thoſe ſublime ſubjects of ſcience which are unconnected with practice. Had he employed that ſubtilty of obſervation, in remarking and deſcribing manners, which is conſpicuous in ſome uſeleſs conjectures in natural philoſophy, there

is little doubt but the world would have received great light, where light is moſt wanted, in the regulation of our paſſions, and the conduct of life. The little he has left us is an invaluable treaſure; and the work I ſhould moſt wiſh to recover, if all his productions were loſt, is the Moral Eſſays.

The Advancement of Learning, though much leſs read than the ſuperficial works of later times, is one of the moſt entertaining and improving books in the language. The remarks ſtrike the mind with ſuch an evidence of conviction, that the truth diſcovered pleaſes like that derived from mathematical demonſtration. His thoughts not only pleaſe and convince by their juſtneſs, but lead the mind to think ſtill farther on the ſubject, and aſſiſt it in its efforts. Not like the trifling writer, who is forced to make the moſt advantage of a good idea, he leaves the reader to comment on a ſolid reflection, when he has once given it utterance.

His

His reputation as an hiſtorian, though great during his life, ſeems gradually to have declined, and is now nearly loſt. His Reign of Henry the Seventh is only read by thoſe whoſe veneration for him induces them to acquaint themſelves with all his works.

Whatever defects the prevalence of a bad taſte may have occaſioned in ſome of his productions, we may compare them all together to a venerable pile of gothic architecture, which, though it has not to boaſt the grace of Grecian elegance, poſſeſſes a ſolidity and ſubſtance, which will cauſe it to endure when not one ſtone ſhall be left upon another in the gaudy edifices of more refined taſte.

When we compare this great man's writings with his life, we are tempted to exclaim with a modern delineator of characters, Alas, poor human nature!

ESSAY XXV.

ON THE PROFESSIONS.

MUCH has been ſaid on the neceſſity of diſcovering the genius at a puerile age, and of conſulting nature in the choice of a profeſſion. Yet, after all, chance uſually determines the boy's deſtination.

It is, indeed, by no means eaſy to find in the child the diſtinguiſhing excellence of the future man. The mind, in the courſe of a few years, appears to undergo a total renovation. Different faculties, like different trees, put forth the bloſſoms which preſage the fruit, at earlier or later periods, according to ſome interior arrangement, which eludes reſearch. They who have taken the moſt

moſt pains to learn the natural propenſity of the young mind, and have been led by ſome ſtriking appearance to chuſe a future employment for it, have found their pupils no more ſkilful or ſucceſsful, than they who were directed to the ſame plan by fortuitous circumſtances. Few parents, and few ſuperintendants of common education, are capable of forming this judgment; a judgment that muſt proceed from an intimate knowledge of the human heart, and a long experience of the changes produced in it by time and accidents.

But it is leſs difficult to diſcover the advantages and diſadvantages of the various employments of life, than to point out thoſe who are formed by nature to fill them with honour.

The clerical profeſſion ſeems to be well adapted to promote the happineſs of him who can command his paſſions, and who is of a contented diſpoſition. He is a chriſtian philoſopher, and poſſeſſes the agreeable privilege of inſtruct-

ing his fellow-creatures in moral, philoſophical, and religious truth. He is at liberty to purſue one of the pleaſanteſt and the moſt tranquil paths of life, that which leads through the diverſified regions of learning. He is uſually reſpected much more than thoſe whoſe birth and fortunes place them in a higher ſphere. He is more a maſter of his time, that invaluable poſſeſſion, than the reſt of the buſy world, becauſe his engagements are at an appointed ſeaſon. But if to accumulate money, either from the neceſſity of providing for a family, or from avarice, be his object, he will find himſelf miſerable, becauſe he is placed in a ſituation where his deſire cannot be gratified with eaſe and honour. The ſtipends of the moſt uſeful part of the clergy, thoſe who officiate, are ſeldom greater than the earnings of the loweſt mechanic. Yet an appearance of a competency muſt be ſupported, not from pride, but from a laudable deſign of accompliſhing the purpoſes of his profeſſion. In vain will

he

he preach*, in vain will he ſet a good example, if his appearance and mode of living contradict the received opinions of congruity, and produce contempt. Rich preferments there are; but theſe, it is obſerved, do not, in the preſent age, fall to merit as the reward of it, but are laviſhed where intereſt and family connection put in their irreſiſtible claim. They ſeem to be conſidered as ſupplemental proviſions for the younger brothers of opulent families. He, therefore, who has neither intereſt nor connections, muſt learn, when he enters on this profeſſion, to view this world's goods in the light in which they have been conſidered by the wiſeſt and beſt of mortals.

More families have been raiſed to civil eminence by the ſtudy of the law, than by any other purſuit. Riches and honours have been profuſely accumulated on its ſucceſsful profeſſors. The mul-

* — rara in tenui facundia panno.

Juv.

tiplication of ſtatutes, and the variety of forms in modern times, have indeed rendered the ſtudy uncommonly intricate, and it ſeems therefore to merit uncommon rewards. But diſtinguiſhed ſucceſs is neceſſarily confined to few, and many have worn out a good conſtitution in peruſing books of all others the leaſt amuſing, without any return of honour or of profit. In this age the profeſſion is overrun by the multitude of nominal, if not real ſtudents. Formerly the heir to a good eſtate was brought up to little elſe than fox-hunting; and to be in at the death, and to water the *quorum* ten miles round, were the objects of his higheſt ambition; but now he is uſually entered at an inn of court, adviſed to read Blackſtone, called to the bar, never gets a brief, returns to his paternal manſion, conſiders himſelf as an inſtance of neglected merit, and grows melancholy. When, after a life of uſeful labour, the advocate is rewarded with a judge's appointment, his labour does not ceaſe. Eaſe, his proper recompence, remains

remains ſtill at a diſtance. Perhaps, during the time of buſineſs, there are few employments more irkſome and unhealthy. The truly valuable rewards are indeed ſeldom obtained in the law, till age and application have weakened the powers of perception; and when theſe are decayed, what are external advantages? Upon the whole, we may conclude, that though the profeſſion of the law, when attended with ſucceſs, is well adapted to raiſe and eſtabliſh a family, it is ſeldom conſiſtent with perſonal tranquillity.

The preparation for the practice of phyſic is by no means agreeable. A philoſopher may indeed attend a diſſection with pleaſure, as affording an opportunity for the obſervation of nature; but it muſt always be diſguſting to view the loathſome objects of an infirmary. Yet this diſcipline is neceſſary; for books alone are of little uſe. After all the expence and labour of education, it is mortifying to the ſenſibility of merit to obſerve thoſe chiefly encouraged, who have little elſe to recommend them than

confidence and external grace of behaviour. He whoſe ſolid knowledge induces him to ſpeak with diffidence on the ſucceſs of a preſcription, is thought by the generality leſs able than the bold pretender. With all his phyſiological knowledge, if he has not the addreſs to conciliate the whims of faſhion on his ſide, his ſenſe of feeling will never be ſoothed by the grateful application of a fee. Men of ſenſe may reſpect him, but his chariot is to be kept on its wheels by fools. When, however, he is ſufficiently employed, it muſt be an additional pleaſure to the natural ſatisfaction of ſucceſs, to find his own emolument ariſing from giving eaſe to the diſtreſſed. Yet it is by no means adviſeable, that any ſhould be trained to this precarious profeſſion, who do not poſſeſs ſuch a degree of independence, as may enable them to be eaſy under the neglect of a capricious world.

The army affords a fine aſylum for thoſe ſpirits, which are too reſtleſs for domeſtic life. But though it has many charms

charms for a warm imagination, it ſeems little adapted to give ſolid comfort at any time, much leſs in the ſeaſon of infirmity and in old age. It is happy for the commonwealth, that the acknowledged gentility of the profeſſion obliterates the ſenſe of its hardſhips.

Still leſs ſuited to afford tranquil pleaſure, the navy is yet always ſupplied even by thoſe who have eaſe and affluence at home. To be confined with a crowd for many months in a wooden machine, is a ſituation which nothing but uſe and example could render tolerable. This lot, however, muſt fall to ſome; and it does not appear, that they to whom it has fallen are leſs happy than the reſt of mankind. Providence wiſely fits the diſpoſition to external circumſtances.

The employment of merchandiſe is commonly eſteemed leſs liberal than any of theſe; and it is true, that the preparation for it, and the arts of keeping and improving money, have a tendency to contract the ſentiments. The other

profeſſions have ſome connection with public ſpirit, with ſcience and philanthropy. The trader's views ſeem to centre in private emolument; and, though he is highly beneficial to the community, it ſeems not from intention; on the contrary, he appears ever ready to take advantage of it without injury to his character, and conſequently to his intereſt. Yet it muſt be confeſſed, that, in our commercial country, and in the preſent age, the mercantile orders have frequently ſhewn themſelves truly honourable and enlightened; and he would act imprudently and ridiculouſly, who ſhould ſlight a good opportunity of introducing his ſon to a ſucceſsful merchandiſe, merely becauſe it has not been held ſo liberal as the profeſſion of him who ſtarves with a doctor's degree.

All the occupations of life are found to have their advantages and diſadvantages admirably adapted to preſerve the juſt equilibrium of happineſs. This we may confidently aſſert, that,

that, whatever are the inconveniencies of any of them, they are all preferable to a ſtate of inaction; to that wretched liſtleſſneſs which is conſtrained to purſue pleaſure as a buſineſs, and, by rendering it the object of ſevere attention, to deſtroy its very eſſence.

ESSAY XXVI.

ON SIMPLICITY OF STYLE IN PROSAIC COMPOSITION.

Grandis et, ut ita dicam, pudica oratio, non eſt maculoſa, nec turgida; ſed naturali pulchritudine exurgit. PETRONIUS.

FOOD that gives the livelieſt pleaſure on the firſt taſte, frequently diſguſts on repetition; and thoſe things which pleaſe the palate without ſatiety, are ſuch as agitate but moderately, and perhaps originally cauſed a diſagreeable ſenſation. Mental food is alſo found by experience to nouriſh beſt, and delight the longeſt, when it is not luſciouſly ſweet. Profuſe ornament and unneceſſary graces, though they may tranſport

tranſport the reader on a firſt peruſal, commonly occaſion a kind of intellectual ſurfeit, which prevents a ſecond.

Immoderate embelliſhment is the mark of a puerile taſte, of a weak judgment, and a little genius. It conveys the idea of too great a labour to pleaſe; an idea, which excludes the appearance of eaſe, without which it is difficult to effect the purpoſe of pleaſing. If the reader enters into the author's ſpirit, he finds his emotions too rapidly excited to be conſiſtent with pleaſurable feelings. Works acknowledged to be written with true taſte, are found for the moſt part to raiſe gentle emotions; and, when it is neceſſary to call up the more violent, the effect is improved from the rarity of the attempt. There is a certain equable flow of ſpirits, which keeps the mind in a tone for the admiſſion of durable pleaſure; but which, when hurried or exalted beyond its natural ſtate, terminates in diſguſt.

There

There are ſeveral books very popular in the preſent age, among the youthful and the inexperienced, which have a ſweetneſs that palls on the taſte, and a grandeur that ſwells to a bloated turgidity. Such are the writings of ſome modern Germans. The Death of Abel is generally read, and preferred by many to all the productions of Greece, Rome, and England. The ſucceſs of this work has given riſe to others on the ſame plan, inferior to this in its real merits, and labouring under the ſame fault of redundant decoration. What others may feel, I know not; but I would no more be obliged to read the works of Geſner repeatedly, than to make a frequent meal on the honey-comb.

The meditations of Harvey, and many books of devotion, are written in that rhapſodic ſtyle, which wearies by its conſtant efforts to elevate the mind to extacy. They have, it is true, an uſeful effect on the rude and uncultivated, who are ſeldom penetrated but by forcible impreſſions; but the pleaſure they give

give is not ſufficiently elegant and refined to attach the more poliſhed reader.

Poetical proſe, as all ſuch writings may be called, ſeems by no means correſpondent to claſſical ideas of beauty. There is no model of it among writers in the golden ages, and it has ſeldom been attempted by the firſt rank of moderns. Fenelon indeed ſucceeded in it, but he richly intermixed the beautiful flowers originally culled by Homer and Virgil. Genius, aſſiſted by claſſical learning, can give a grace to compoſitions formed on a plan not quite conformable to the moſt approved taſte.

Many modern ſermons, while their authors aimed at ſublimity and a highly figurative eloquence, have become turgid and affected. The ſimple majeſty of the ſacred writings affords a proper model for ſacred oratory; and it muſt be owned, to the honour of the regular clergy, that they have commonly imitated it; and that the high-flown, enthuſiaſtic, and pompous harangue has uſually been the production of thoſe who

have renounced reaſon in matters of taſte as well as of religion. Addreſſed to the meaneſt capacities in the loweſt orders, it may have produced a deſirable effect in compelling their attention, and in warming their inflammable paſſions. But, it is to be feared, its effect was but temporary, and it is certain that it can never poſſeſs a place among the elegant works of literature.

It is agreeable to the mind to be occaſionally rouſed by a powerful ſtroke; but it ſuffers a kind of ſmart, from a continual repetition of the blow. It is merely teazed and wearied by the feeble yet uninterrupted attack of the impotent writer, whoſe inclination ſtimulates while genius flags.

The Bible, the Iliad, and Shakeſpeare's works are allowed to be the ſublimeſt books that the world can exhibit. They are alſo truly ſimple; and the reader is the more affected by their indiſputable ſublimity, becauſe his attention is not wearied by ineffectual attempts at it. He who is acquainted with Longinus

will remember, that the inſtances adduced by that great pattern of the excellence he deſcribes, are not remarkable for a glaring or a pompous ſtyle, but derive their claim to ſublimity from a noble energy of thought, modeſtly ſet off by a proper expreſſion.

No author has been more univerſally approved than Xenophon. Yet his writings diſplay no appearance of ſplendour or majeſty; nothing elevated or adorned with figures; no affectation of ſuperfluous ornament. His merit is an unaffected ſweetneſs, which no affectation can obtain. The graces ſeem to have conſpired to form the becoming texture of his compoſition. And yet, perhaps, a common reader would neglect him, becauſe the eaſy and natural air of his narrative rouſes no violent emotion. More refined underſtandings peruſe him with delight; and Cicero has recorded that Scipio, when once he had opened the books of Xenophon, would with difficulty be prevailed with to cloſe them. His ſtyle, ſays the ſame great

orator and critic, is ſweeter than honey, and the muſes themſelves ſeem to have ſpoken from his mouth.

Julius Cæſar is thought to have reſembled him in his ſtyle, as he did in the circumſtance of profeſſion. He has nothing florid or grand, but, like a gentle river, flows on with a ſurface unruffled. A wonderful inſtance of moderation, to have recounted his own achievements with accuracy, yet without being, for a moment, betrayed into an unbecoming pomp either of diction or repreſentation. Yet with all the gracefulneſs of modeſty and ſimplicity, he has an air of grandeur that commands reſpect. Oſtentatious ornament would indeed have been contemptible deformity.

Cicero, who underſtood and valued the ſimplicity of Xenophon, was, however, himſelf ſometimes guilty of its violation. He adopted the Aſiatic manner in ſome of his orations, and they are ſometimes more verboſe, diffuſe, and affected, than an attic taſte can patiently endure. But it is a kind of ſacrilege, as well as preſumption,

ſumption, to detract from the deſerved glory of a man, who in his life and writings advanced human nature to the higheſt perfection.

The French nation is an affected nation; but many of their authors have written with remarkable ſimplicity. Fontaine and Fontenelle are acknowledged to have equalled in this beauty the antient models. They have, however, writers of the other kind, and I muſt own, I never could admire many of their boaſted orators. Even their Boſſuet and their Bourdaloue are not adapted to the taſte of an Engliſh or an Attic audience.

Simplicity is not in general the diſtinguiſhing beauty of Engliſh writers. Their ſpirit and ſolemnity of diſpoſition have ſometimes given their writings an ill-placed pomp and magnificence. But the works of an Addiſon and a Sterne, and the reception they have met with, will vindicate the nation from the charge of wanting taſte for ſimple beauty. The antients have been much imitated in

England; and where that is the caſe, a taſte for ſimplicity will ſometimes get the better of prevailing gothiciſm. The German manner, it is hoped, will not ſupplant the Attic.

To write in a plain manner appears eaſy in theory; but how few in compariſon have avoided the fault of unneceſſary and falſe ornament! The greater part ſeem to have miſtaken unwieldy corpulence for robuſt vigour, and to have deſpiſed the temperate habit of ſound health as meagreneſs. The taſte for finery is more general than for ſymmetrical beauty and chaſte elegance; and many, like Nero, would not be content till they had ſpoiled, by gilding it, the ſtatue of a Lyſippus.

ESSAY XXVII.

ON AFFECTATION OF THE CHARACTER OF SPORTSMEN.

Gaudet equis canibuſque.——

HOR.

He loves you beſt of all things, ſave his horſe.

POPE.

ANIMALS that are hurtful to man, and are therefore deſtroyed by him, ſeem to have an inſtinctive knowledge of their enemy, and avoid his approach before they can have experienced his power or his contrivance. Man likewiſe poſſeſſes a counteracting inſtinct, which leads him to the receſſes of the foreſt, and bears him with alacrity through all the dangers and fatigues of a chace.

This inſtinct was neceſſary to his ſubſiſtence, as well as defence, in the ſavage ſtate; for the prey that he caught was his only food. Implanted in his conſtitution, it continues to operate with great force, even when he is advanced to a ſtate in which his wants are ſupplied by the inventions of civiliſed life. The hunter, even in theſe days, purſues the prey with an inſtinctive ardour, no leſs blind and impetuous than that which impels the hounds that accompany him. With all his boaſted ſuperiority of reaſon, he then appears merely an animal deſtroying a leſs ſagacious brute, to obey the impulſe of his hunger.

In our country, where every improvement of life is advanced to an exalted height, the inſtinct of the hunter is not obliterated by the new propenſities ſuperinduced in a ſtate of civilization. There is ſcarcely an individual of thoſe who are not refined to a very uncommon degree, but delights in the ſports of the field. The rich muſt not flatter themſelves with an idea that their taſte is peculiar to themſelves;

themſelves; for there is no taſte more vulgar, more prevalent among the loweſt orders, than the taſte for deſtroying noxious animals, protected by the legiſlature for the amuſement of the wealthy. The mechanic leaves, without remorſe, the employment which is to ſupport himſelf and his family, to follow the Eſquire in the chace of a fox, and would rather ſhoot a pheaſant or inſnare a trout, than earn a guinea. The glee with which he recounts the adventures of the purſuit, proves it to be a pleaſure congenial to his heart.

A wiſe politician, who did not wiſh to monopoliſe the delights of the chace, would encourage this taſte among the vagabond and the unemployed. For beſides its utility in the deſtruction of vermin, it tends to infuſe a ſpirit, a hardineſs, and a ſubtilty, well ſuited to qualify ſuch perſons for the dangers and the hardſhips, the contrivances and the ſtratagems, of a naval and military life. A man who is excluded from more liberal employments by the lowneſs of his ſtation, may render himſelf a uſeful

member of ſociety by catching moles and hares, rats and foxes.

But it is really no leſs ridiculous than lamentable, that the heir to an eſtate, the man of education, ſhould forego the honours and pleaſures of ſocial, civil, literary exertions, merely to enjoy the delight of joining a pack of hounds in the deſtruction of a helpleſs animal. Yet the truth is, this inſtinct operates with the greateſt violence among thoſe whoſe opportunities for improvement might enable them to ſubdue every leſs laudable relique of ſavage humanity. The nobles of our land, whoſe example might have a ſalutary influence in diſſeminating every uſeful quality, are often deſtitute of all ideas of excellence beyond the ſphere of a ſtable. They indeed indulge their propenſity without controul. The laws are on their ſide, and the poor man is prevented from deſtroying the vermin that fattens on his ſubſtance. The game laws are, however, confeſſed by thoſe who enact them to be a diſgrace to an enlightened age.

At

At the ſame time that they infringe on liberty, they argue a very conſiderable degree of barbariſm.

The love of rural ſports, with all their appendages of horſes, dogs, and jockies, is at preſent carried ſo far, that the gentleman by birth labours to lower himſelf to the rank of a huntſman, and even dreſſes himſelf in the garb of an oſtler. It would not, in the preſent day, be ſurpriſing to meet a privy-counſellor in leather breeches, and a judge in a jockey-cap.

And why ſhould they be cenſured, ſays the pretender to ſuperior reaſon? Is a man leſs honeſt or leſs learned, according to any difference in his exterior? It is certain that, if the world were filled with philoſophers, it would be a circumſtance of little moment. But every thing that lowers the great in the eyes of the vulgar, injures ſociety by diſturbing the ſettled climax of ſubordination. The vulgar are awed into ſubmiſſion by no methods ſo effectually, as by a reſpectable outſide. Were a clergyman,

clergyman, for inſtance, to aſcend the pulpit in the dreſs of a poſtilion, he might ſpeak with the tongue of an angel, and yet be diſregarded. His appearance, even on other occaſions, in the livery of a ſportſman, though it may recommend him to his patron, will degrade him among his pariſhioners.

The influence of dreſs on manners is conſiderable, though not much attended to by the moraliſt. Horace indeed relates, that when Eutrapelus wiſhed to do any one an injury, he gave him fine clothes*. The cauſe of an effect thus produced in the diſpoſition by the external habit, is, that the mind inſenſibly adopts ſomething of the character it perſonates. There is a natural love of congruity, which requires the behaviour to correſpond with the dreſs. He who aſſumes all the externals of low life, will ſoon exhibit proofs of internal abaſement. If the peer condeſcends to ſpend his days in a ſtable, and to dreſs like his

* —— Eutrapelus cuicunque nocere volebat
Veſtimenta dabat pretioſa.

groom,

groom, he will ſoon differ from him in thoſe circumſtances alone which render his degeneracy more conſpicuous and deteſtable. It will not be thought calumny to aſſert, that our own times can exhibit ſome melancholy examples of this diſgraceful humiliation.

A taſte for the pleaſures of the race is indeed juſtified by the example of a moſt refined people. But the Greeks, it is imagined, did not adopt it as affording an opportunity for gaming. In our age and nation it is warmly patroniſed by the illuſtrious and noble; but it is alſo frequented by thoſe who come to take advantage of their ſuperiors folly. And theſe, by a ſtrange event, are admitted to familiarity with the great, whoſe wealth they pillage, and whoſe principles they corrupt.

Rural ſports, alſo, when not purſued with an attention greater than their importance will admit, afford a healthy and a manly relaxation. But when all the circumſtances which relate to them are conſidered with a ſerioufneſs, and purſued

purſued with an ardour which momentous buſineſs only can juſtify, the moraliſt cannot help lamenting that ſo much uſeful induſtry is miſplaced. When they lead the rich and liberal into cnmpany and occupations which degrade their dignity, he cannot but expreſs an indignant ſentiment. He ſees with regret, at a time when national virtue is particularly required, thoſe who have moſt influence in a nation, totally engaged with dogs, horſes, and grooms.

To value a noble animal for its uſe, to admire it for its beauty and ſwiftneſs, to love it for its generous alacrity in the ſervice of man, is natural and reaſonable. It is indeed the mark of an amiable diſpoſition, to obſerve and to be pleaſed with the manners and actions of the poor animals whom nature has ſubjected to our command. If fidelity and generoſity are lovely qualities, the dog and the horſe have a peculiar claim to a ſhare of affection. But they who circum-

ſcribe

ſcribe their ideas within the verge of a ſtable, who prefer the company of their irrational animals to the ſociety of a fellow-creature, ſeem to be in danger of gradually aſſimilating with their nature, and of acquiring a degree of brutal ferocity.

ESSAY XXVIII.

ON SOME OF THE MINOR ENGLISH POETS.

WE are told in the epiſtle to the Piſos, that poetical mediocrity is intolerable; yet we find that Poets of inferior merit as well as fame, are read with pleaſure.

It is true, indeed, that the loudeſt melody of the grove is poured forth by the lark, the blackbird, the thruſh, and the nightingale; but it is no leſs true, that their pauſes are often filled by the ſweet warblings of the linnet and the red-breaſt. The lofty cedar that waves on the ſummit of the poetic mountain, ſeems to overſhadow, and exclude by its luxuriance, all other vegetation.

vegetation. He, however, who approaches it, will find many a violet and primroſe ſpringing at its root. He will often diſcover, amid a plentiful growth of weeds, a modeſt flowret lifting its humble head, and becoming more beautiful by ſeeming to conceal the native ſweetneſs of its odour, and the luſtre of its hues.

The firſt dignities in the commonwealth of letters are pre-occupied by ſuch writers as Spenſer, Milton, Dryden, and Pope; but, at the ſame time, the numerous ſubaltern ſtations are frequently filled with honour.

Many Poets of original beauty were originally ſo obſcure as to be now totally unknown. Such are the authors of our moſt popular ballads, the general reception of which is a proof of their excellence, more convincing than the deciſions of criticiſm. The learned Poet has commonly owed much of his excellence to imitation; but the ballad-writer drew only from his own reſources when he ſung the wild wood-notes of nature. Their metre often

poſſeſſes a kind of harmony quite different from claſſical verſification, indeed, yet, at the ſame time, pleaſing to the uncorrupted ear.

Of Poets once known and admired, ſeveral are fallen into total diſrepute. Drayton was honoured by a commentator who muſt have given fame to any writer. If Selden's taſte was equal to his learning, Drayton is indeed moſt highly diſtinguiſhed. The Polyolbion is, however, no more read; and the ſlow length of the tedious alexandrine in which it is written, will prevent its revival, as it has haſtened its oblivion.

The Gondibert of D'Avenant has been the ſubject of critical controverſy from the time of its publication. Its plan was originally defended by the great Hobbes, and its execution has been greatly praiſed. Yet few have attended to it with pleaſure, and ſtill fewer have had a degree of patience ſufficient to bear them through the peruſal of it. The truth is, the ſtanza which he adopted, is better ſuited to elegiac than

than to heroic poetry. A beautifully deſcriptive paſſage interſperſed in the courſe of two or three hundred lines, will not alleviate the tedium of the reſt. An occaſional flaſh of lightning cannot illuminate the continued gloomineſs of the whole proſpect.

For the honour of Engliſh literature, moſt of the poetical productions which were admired in the reign of Charles, ſhould now be conſigned to everlaſting oblivion. They diſplay, indeed, much genius and a ſportiveneſs of fancy, but they are incorrect and licentious beyond the example of any age. Some of the beſt poets of the times, among whom were Mulgrave, Dorſet, and Roſcommon, though poſſeſſed of wit and taſte, produced nothing worthy of immortality. The morals of the age were as licentious as the taſte; and the love of pleaſure introduced an indolence, which admitted not an application ſufficient to give the laſt poliſh of correct elegance.

The ſtudy of the antients, and of the French, has gradually refined the national taſte to a degree of faſtidious delicacy; and writers who poſſeſſed claſſical beauty were read, even though they had nothing to recommend them to the notice of a Charles the Second or a Sedley.

The number of minor poets who diſplayed great merit, yet who ſeem to have derived it all from imitation, is too tedious to recapitulate. Philips and his friend Smith were correct and claſſical in a degree ſuperior to their contemporaries. Philips has performed the taſk of imitation, with an accuracy of reſemblance ſcarcely equalled by any of his followers but Browne. The Phædra and Hippolitus of Smith has ever been eſteemed a fine poem, and the beauty of the ſtyle and harmony of the verſe induce us to regret that he lived to finiſh ſo few productions.

Within the ſpace of half the laſt century, a deſire to imitate the excellent models of our more celebrated bards, has crowded

crowded the middle ranks with a multitude too great to obtain, even for the deſerving individual, any very diſtinguiſhed fame. One Poet has ariſen after another, and ſupplanted him as the ſucceeding wave ſeems to ſwallow up the wave that went before*. Moſt of them have exhibited an harmonious verſification, and have ſelected a profuſion of ſplendid expreſſions; but have in general been deficient in that noble fire, and thoſe ſimple graces, which mark originality of genius. They are, however, read with pleaſure, and ſweetly fill up the intervals of avocation among the buſy and commercial world, who are not acquainted with the Greeks and Romans, and with whom novelty poſſeſſes the charm of beauty.

There is a force and ſolemnity in the poems of Tickell, which at leaſt place him on a level with his patron as a poet. His Colin and Lucy is one of the moſt ſweetly pathetic poems in the language.

*——— velut unda ſupervenit undam. Hor.

Broome, though honourably aſſociated with Pope in the work of tranſlation, ſeems to have had ſcarcely any other merit than this to bear him down the ſtream of time.

Trapp wrote Latin verſe with elegance, and was a good critic; but it has been obſerved of his Virgil, that he had done wiſely to have ſtopped at his preface.

The genius of Collins ſeems in ſome meaſure to have reſembled that of Tickell. Dignity, ſolemnity, and pathos, are the ſtriking features of his compoſitions. None but a true poet could have written the ſong over Fidele in Shakeſpeare's Cymbeline.

The Engliſh Tibullus, Hammond, has written truly elegant verſe; but I know not whether his repreſentations greatly affect the heart, though they are approved by the judgment and imagination. They have, however, ſerved as patterns for the love-ſick nymphs and ſwains who delight in giving vent to their paſſion in the language of poetry.

Love and its effects were beautifully deſcribed by the elegantly ſenſible Lord Lyttelton. To aſſert that he was remarkable for poetical genius, were to leſſen by endeavouring to exaggerate his praiſe. Force, fire, and an exuberance of invention, were not his excellences; but that equable beauty of ſentiment and diction, which reſults from an elegant mind. The graces diſtinguiſh his compoſitions, as the virtues marked his honourable life.

Moore's Fables diſplay indubitable marks of genius; but he wants the ſimplicity of Gay and Fontaine. He ſhews, however, a talent for deſcription, which would have ſhone in the higher kinds of poetry; and a delicacy of mind, which, it might be ſuppoſed, could be acquired only in a higher ſphere than that in which he was born.

Genius and learning were poſſeſſed in a very eminent degree by Merrick. He had that peculiar kind of genius which qualified him to excel in the department of ſacred poetry. It is to be

wiſhed, that his verſion of the Pſalms were adopted in churches, not only in the place of Sternhold and Hopkins, but of Brady and Tate. Such an event would be no leſs advantageous to piety, than to taſte.

There is a vein of original thought and deſcription in the poems of Matthew Green; and an animation of ſtyle in thoſe of Cawthorn, which, though they entitle them to a conſiderable ſhare of poetical reputation, ſcarcely excuſe their incorrectneſs and inequality.

Gray and Maſon will hardly be claſſed among the minor Poets. To ſpeak indeed of living writers with freedom, is in general an invidious taſk. It is however happy, that the moſt impartial critic may concur with the world in praiſing a Glover, the Wartons, an Anſty, a Roberts, an Armſtrong, and a Barbauld. Theſe and ſeveral more would have ſhone with very diſtinguiſhed ſplendor, if they had not obſcured the ſeparate glory of each other, by the general luſtre of their united radiance.

Whatever

Whatever may be the merit of the minor Poets, as it is ſubordinate merit, it is perhaps rather unfavourable to the prevalence of good taſte, that they are more generally read than the fathers of Engliſh poetry. The Bookſeller's Miſcellany may lie on our table for occaſional peruſal, but muſt not ſuperſede the volumes of Spenſer, Milton, Garth, Dryden, and Pope.

We may congratulate the Public on the late edition of the great Engliſh Poets complete. The portable ſize in which they appear, beſides their other advantages, will cauſe them to be much more read than hitherto. A convenient form and external elegance contribute greatly to the general diffuſion of volumes, the intrinſic merit of which would ſeem not to want mechanical recommendation.

ESSAY XXIX.

ON THE NECESSITY OF AN ATTENTION TO THINGS AS WELL AS BOOKS.

——— inſenuitque
Libris et curis; ſtatuâ taciturniùs exit
Plerumque, et riſu populum quatit. ———
HOR.

SIR,

AFTER thirty years conſtant reſidence at the univerſity, I thought myſelf ſupremely happy, when I was at laſt preſented by my college to a living worth two hundred a year. During ſo long a period, I had treaſured up many ideas for the regulation of my future conduct, and congratulated myſelf, that my theory was now to be reduced to practice.

I found

I found my parſonage-houſe a large antiquated building, in a delightful ſituation, and capable of very great improvement. I had been uſed to ſee every thing around me in the beſt order, and had acquired a love of external decency in all the articles of dreſs and habitation. I ſent therefore without heſitation for the builder, and gave him an unlimited order to repair every thing in a ſtyle of becoming elegance. The work was done entirely to my mind, and I had nothing to find fault with but the bill, which came to three times the ſum mentioned in the eſtimate, and almoſt exhauſted my purſe of the little ſavings in a collegiate life.

My garden was laid out in gravel walks interſecting each other at right angles, and its only ornament was a few yew-trees clipped into peacocks. I ordered every tree and plant to be rooted up, the walks to be turned to ſerpentine, and the whole to be planted with the moſt beautiful ſhrubs. A

cloſe

close of about an acre at the bottom lay so contiguous, that it tempted me to add it to the garden. No labour or ingenuity was spared, and I own I felt a little satisfaction in a consciousness of possessing the grounds about me in a taste superior to the Esquire himself. In the ardour of reformation it did not occur, that I was not only expending more than I could afford, but involving myself in a necessity of keeping an additional and skilful servant, constantly to superintend my improvements. I had neglected utility for ornaments, and had planted the fir and the laurel instead of the olitory. After incurring some ridicule of the neighbourhood, I was obliged to change my shrubbery to a cabbage-garden, and to resume my close as pasture-ground for my poney.

I no sooner settled than it was suggested to me by an attorney who wanted business, that my living was worth much more than I should receive, and that I owed it to myself and successors to receive the tythes in kind. I entered on

on the project with great zeal, built a barn, and bought a cart; but in a meeting of farmers, not one of whom could read or write his own name, I was talked out of the ſcheme, and prevailed on to let my living for life, two-thirds under its real value.

In ſome of my accidental viſits, I was cunningly informed, that there was in the neighbourhood a lady of fortune, who in every reſpect was well qualified to make me an agreeable partner for life, and who appeared to have a partiality for the clergy. My hopes were raiſed to a great height, and upon introduction I found, notwithſtanding ſome artful behaviour, that I ſhould ſoon ſucceed. I married her, and found, to my ſmart, that ſhe was no leſs deficient in temper and underſtanding, than in the fortune which had been talked of. She was not the choice of my heart, but impoſed upon me by a kind of fatal neceſſity; and I therefore ſubmitted to my lot with the patience of a Socrates.

I had

I had ever entertained exalted ideas of the utility and pleaſure of old Engliſh hoſpitality, and had promiſed myſelf a plentiful table whenever I ſhould become maſter of a houſe. The beſt of wines, the beſt of proviſions were brought to it, and theſe were allurements that prevented the poſſibility of its being deſerted. The neighbouring gentlemen liked both my port and ale, and I was ſo happy as to give them ſatisfaction with my Madeira; a circumſtance which, though it pleaſed them and me at the time, was a ſubject of ſome uneaſineſs to my wine-merchant, who found that a pipe a year was a great tax on an annual income of two hundred pounds.

The baker's, butcher's, and maltſter's bills were a kind of manuſcripts never met with in the Bodleian, and to the peruſal of which I was quite unuſed. I had much rather have collated a dozen Greek copies, than have caſt up a ſum conſiſting of twenty articles. This diſinclination ſoon introduced a perplexity

perplexity in my accounts, which I was too indolent to unravel, till at laſt an accumulation of debt required a degree of œconomy to which my ſpirit could with difficulty ſubmit.

In the ſilent retreat of my college chamber, the noiſe of children had never invaded my ear. I had been uſed for thirty years to ſcarcely any interruption, ſave the tinkling of the chapel and the dinner bell; and it is difficult to expreſs the horrors I ſuffered in liſtening to the cries of my little girl, and the prattle of nurſes, while my folios lay unopened before me. All I knew of the infant ſtate was collected from poets and philoſophers; from whom I had learned that all was mild, placid, and ſweet, in the native manners of the infant. Amid the din, which was ſeldom interrupted, night or day, how often did I wiſh myſelf tranſported to the bliſsful region of the common room fire-ſide. Delightful retreat, where never female ſhewed her head ſince the days of the founder!

There

There was one circumſtance attending my new ſituation, which, though only an imaginary evil, gave me at firſt a ſenſible mortification. As a ſenior fellow, I was a little monarch within the verge of my college. The ſtatutes had required, that perſons of the lower degrees ſhould paſs before me, nay, ſtand in the quadrangle whenever I was preſent, with heads uncovered. From this general obeiſance, and from many other circumſtances, I had been led to conceive myſelf a perſon of great importance. I was ſo, indeed, in the circumſcribed limits of my ſociety. But the misfortune was, that I could not eaſily free myſelf from the conſciouſneſs of it when no longer a member. I own it was a weakneſs; yet perhaps a pardonable one, becauſe it was occaſioned by my peculiar ſituation, that I felt myſelf hurt if any of my pariſhioners went by me without paying great reſpect, and that the Lord of the manor conſidered himſelf as my ſuperior. I had to diſcover, by experience, the

truth of what the poet has ſaid, that the learned pate muſt duck to the wealthy fool.

Though by no means remarkable for diffidence, I felt myſelf aukward and uneaſy, when admitted into the company of thoſe who were ſtyled the polite. I had thought and read upon moſt ſubjects; yet I found my remarks leſs attended to than thoſe of the confeſſedly illiterate. Matter I poſſeſſed; but the manner was wanting. That eaſy kind of trifling, which pleaſes without fatiguing the attention of the ſuperficial, was not among my academical acquirements. Thus with inclination and ſome ability to join in general converſation and intercourſe, I was reduced to a ſtate of ſolitude, and wiſhed in vain for the frank and good-natured aſſociates of the common room.

Upon the whole, my condition is far leſs happy and leſs reſpectable, than I had reaſon to expect. I have diſ-

covered, when it is almoſt too late, that I had confined my views within too narrow limits, by attending only to the affairs of a college. I have learned the neceſſity of ſtudying things with all the attention paid to an abſtruſe ſcience; and will recommend it to thoſe whoſe proſpects in life are ſimilar to mine, to devote ſome part of their time to the conſideration of common affairs; of a few mechanic arts, ſuch as concern building, repairing, gardening; of agriculture, and of the manners of huſbandmen. They will thus not only ſpend the cloſe of their life with more pleaſure to themſelves, but will more effectually accompliſh the ends of the clerical profeſſion.

Of the imprudence of a contrary conduct, I ſtand a melancholy inſtance. I am left alone, at a time when the amuſement of companions is moſt wanted to help out the laſt ſtage in the journey of life. I remain

in a total ignorance of the world, at a period when others are become wiſe by experience; and I am involved in the miſtakes of youth, without its amiable qualities to palliate them.

ESSAY XXX.

ON THE AMUSEMENT OF MUSIC.

MOST of the pleaſurable diverſions have a tendency, when purſued with ardour, not only to relax, but to enervate the mind. They indiſpoſe for manly virtue, and introduce a tenderneſs, ill ſuited to encounter the uſual aſperities of life. But the ſtudy of Muſic, while it ſweetly ſooths the ſenſe of hearing, touches the ſoul, and elevates and refines its nature. Conducted by philoſophy, it is able to infuſe the nobleſt thoughts, to urge to the moſt animated action, to calm the ruffled ſpirits, and to eradicate every malignant propenſity.

Amid

Amid the invectives thrown out againſt the diſſipated manners of the preſent age, its taſte for Muſic deſerves applauſe. Even as a ſource of ſenſual pleaſure, it is one of the pureſt and moſt dignified; yet it may be lamented, that it is chiefly cultivated as a ſenſual pleaſure; becauſe that which titillates the ear, is not always the beſt calculated to affect the heart. Simple muſic, for which the preſent age ſeems to have little reliſh, is capable of producing the moſt violent effects on the ſentiments; and the neglect of it is the cauſe that the mind is often little intereſted in the moſt celebrated compoſitions.

He who has made muſic the ſtudy of his life, and poſſeſſes an ear refined by application to faſtidious delicacy, is pleaſed with the nice productions of the Italian compoſer. But let the admired compoſition be performed in the hearing of another whoſe natural powers are equally ſenſible, but who has been uſed to the works of Purcell and

Handel, and he will find his ear not greatly delighted, and his heart totally unaffected.

The kind of muſic, however excellent as a piece of art, which penetrates no farther than the ear, produces an effect quite different from that originally intended by the invention. As a pleaſure of the ſenſe, though elegant in a high degree, it yet contributes to increaſe imbecillity. The inartificial muſic of the drum, at which the connoiſſeur might be enraged, is better able to produce the genuine effects of muſic, lively emotions of mind, than the fine modulations of a Fiſchar's hautboy.

Of what kind is the muſic that delights thoſe who are ſtigmatiſed by the name of vulgar, but who poſſeſs all the faculties of perception, in a ſtate undepraved by artificial refinement? Theſe are the unaltered ſons of nature; and the ſounds which univerſally pleaſe them, are thoſe which nature intended ſhould pleaſe, and for which ſhe adapted

the

the finely ſuſceptible ſenſe. The drum, the fife, the trumpet, the harp, the bagpipe, and the dulcimer, are the inſtruments which inſpire the lower ranks with joy and with courage, and which alleviate the ſenſe of the greateſt labours and the greateſt dangers. If we were to ſuppoſe a Giardini condeſcending to play at a rural fair, there is little doubt but his audience would be ſtolen away from him by the itinerant performer on a Scotch bagpipe.

There are certain ballads and certain tunes adapted to them, which are known to almoſt every individual in a nation, and which pleaſe on every repetition. The muſic as well as the poetry of theſe, is ſimple in the extreme. The Scotch tunes have a ſweetneſs which delights every ear unſpoiled by the complex productions of laborious ingenuity, but which the Italian maſter knows not to intermix in his boaſted works. And yet, nothing can be more natural and eaſy than the wild notes of the Highland ſwain.

There are alſo certain pſalm tunes, which, with little merit as technical performances, are enabled to excite in the mind a great degree of devotional extacy. Thoſe of the hundredth and the hundredth and fourth pſalms, are the moſt popular muſic in England; and they are no leſs adapted to excite a ſpirit of piety, than to ſooth the ear with their ſimple melody.

Theſe obſervations are adduced with a view to recommend the adoption of a taſte for ſimple muſic, among thoſe who ſtudy muſic merely for the entertainment of a domeſtic circle, as well as among thoſe who make it a profeſſion. It appears to be more pleaſing to the ear in its natural ſtate, than the laboured and complicated productions of the modern muſician; and experience abundantly proves, that it powerfully affects the heart and the imagination. If then it were received in thoſe numerous families, where in the preſent age Muſic forms a conſtant diverſion, its effect on the morals of the people

would be truly important. It would elevate with piety, warm with generoſity, and enlarge and ennoble, correct and purify every affection. There is ſcarcely any ſentiment which may not be excited, increaſed, diminiſhed, or modified by a piece of muſic, ſimple enough to be ſtrongly expreſſive. Thus powerful as well as ſweet, it is to be wondered at, as well as regretted, that it ſhould be ſuperſeded by a ſpecies of harmony, ingenious indeed, yet poſſeſſing little other claim to attention, but as it affords an elegant amuſement for a vacant hour. Muſic at preſent often forms a part of education; and it is to be lamented, that an accompliſhment, which, when properly regulated, is moſt efficacious in filling the young mind with virtuous ſentiments, ſhould form only an innocent paſtime and polite employment.

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is really true, that Muſic ſeems of late to be addreſſed to the eye as well

as

as to the ear*. Dexterity of execution, the wonderfully expeditious motion of the fingers, the hand, and the arm, cauſe an equal ſhare of applauſe with the tones of the inſtrument. He who can hold his breath the longeſt, is proportionably honoured with the longeſt continuation of plaudits. The ſweeteſt ſhepherd that ever piped on his Doric reed, would be leſs applauded than he who can make his pipe ſqueak five minutes without reſpiration. The lyre of Apollo would ſcarcely engage attention, while the finger of a modern was dancing on the ſtrings of a violoncello. To attain to the excellence of rapid execution, requires the labour of a life; while a much leſs degree of application would enable a performer to raviſh and captivate the heart, if the natural feelings were not ſet aſide by adſcititious taſte.

* ——— migravit ab AURE voluptas
Omnis ad incertos oculos.

Hor.

It

It is often urged as a reaſon for neglecting the ſtudy and performance of Muſic, that to excel in it, to play in ſuch a manner as not to offend a judge, requires a portion of time incompatible with an attention to more valuable acquirements. To arrive at this ſurpriſing expedition, this muſical legerdemain, it is indeed neceſſary to do little elſe than ſcrape and pipe. But a comparatively moderate dexterity is ſufficient to effect all the great purpoſes of Muſic, thoſe of moving the paſſions in the cauſe of virtue, and of exciting ſentiments of manly pleaſure. Fortunately, the ſimple muſic, which is to produce theſe deſirable effects, is the moſt eaſily performed. The moſt powerful influence of Muſic ever known, is recorded in the volumes of antiquity; but it is certain that the muſical inſtruments of antiquity were ſimple in ſo great a degree, that it has perplexed the modern muſician to diſcover how they were capable of producing a tolerable harmony. The feats of Timotheus, however, though aſtoniſhing,

aoſtniſhing, are thought by many not to have been fabulous. He indeed who looks into the Opera-houſe after reading Dryden's Ode, will be induced, from the vacant countenance and ſleepy eye, to judge that the muſical art of Timotheus may be numbered among the loſt arts in which antiquity excelled, and which the moderns ambitiouſly, yet vainly, imitate.

To produce the full effect of Muſic, it is neceſſary that the ſiſter art which operates in conjunction with it, ſhould not be united by a forced alliance. Good poetry and good muſic, each of which is ſeparately powerful, acquire by union an irreſiſtible force over the human heart. Yet every one knows, that many a fine piece of muſic is deformed by the moſt wretched rhymes that ever were tagged by a hungry poetaſter. Songs we have in abundance, written by authors of acknowledged excellence; and it is ſurely a want of ſpirit to adopt, in preference to theſe, the nonſenſe which a muſician has purchaſed

chaſed in Grub-ſtreet to be accompanied by his excellent melody. It is indeed to be wiſhed, that the ſuperior poets of the age would combine with the beſt compoſers of muſic, and do honour to themſelves, and to the arts they love, in cementing ſo natural an union by a liberal communication of mutual aſſiſtance.

ESSAY XXXI.

ON THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

THE ſcarcity of Books, a few centuries ago, was the principal obſtacle to the advancement of learning. The multitude of them is become, in the preſent age, ſcarcely leſs injurious to its intereſts, by diſtracting the ſtudent in his choice, and by diffuſing an incorrect and undiſtinguiſhing taſte.

To read all books on all ſubjects, would require an uninterrupted attention during the longeſt life even of an Antediluvian. To read only the moſt celebrated, written in a few languages, is an employment ſufficient to fill up every hour of laborious application. For the ſake then of ſaving time, and of directing the judgment of the inexperienced,

perienced, it becomes an uſeful attempt to ſuggeſt ſome hints, which may tend to facilitate ſelection.

One rule of the greateſt conſequence is, to read only or chiefly the original treatiſes in all the various departments of ſcience, and of literature. The ſame ſpace of time, though not the ſame degree of attention, is neceſſary to peruſe the faint copies of imitative induſtry, as would appropriate the ſolid productions of native genius. This rule is more particularly to be obſerved on the firſt entrance on ſtudy. The foundation muſt ever be laid deep, and formed of ſolid materials. The ſuperſtructure will often admit ſlight and ſuperficial appendages. When we have ſtudied the fine reliques of thoſe who have lived before us, we may derive much pleaſure from attending to the additional labours of contemporary genius. But to begin with theſe is to found, like the fool recorded in the Goſpel, an edifice in the ſand.

It were no leſs preſumptuous than ſuperfluous to addreſs directions in the choice of authors, to the learned. But we may venture, without arrogance, to point out a few to the notice of the ingenuous pupil, with a deſign to abbreviate or facilitate his labour.

He who is entering on the ſtudy of divinity, will naturally devote his firſt attention to the ſcriptures. The original language of the Old Teſtament is often unknown even to the learned and ingenious; and notwithſtanding what ſome critics have, as it were, officially obſerved on the ſubject, the neglect of it is ſeldom attended with much diſadvantage. But the knowledge of Greek is indiſpenſably neceſſary, if theology is purſued as a profeſſion.

The prophetical parts will claim the greateſt ſhare of attention in the peruſal of the Old Teſtament. Dr. Hurd's Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies will be a ſufficient guide for ſubſequent application to them. To illuſtrate the New Teſtament, it will be proper to have recourſe

recourſe to Percy's Key to it, to Trapp's Notes, to Locke on the Epiſtles, and to Mede on the Apocalypſe. With theſe aſſiſtances the ſtudent, who is not deficient in natural ability, will make a competent proficiency, even though he ſhould totally neglect thoſe myriads of treatiſes which have rendered the body of divinity, as it is called, enormous beyond comprehenſion.

The ſtudent in phyſic is commonly introduced to the knowledge of it by a public lecturer, who ſuperintends his courſe of reading. Natural and experimental ſcience, in all their ramifications, are neceſſary to his further advancement. Theſe alone will indeed render him ingenious in his cloſet, but will avail little at the bedſide. To theſe muſt be added a moſt accurate obſervation of the human frame in all its fluctuations of health, diſeaſe, and convaleſcence. The reading of caſes ſtrictly delineated, is found to be the beſt ſuccedaneum where actual practice and obſervation are precluded. Syſtem is in general deluſive and inſufficient.

To the profeſſed lawyer, ſcarcely any book on the ſubject of law is unintereſting or uſeleſs. But he who purſues the ſtudy merely as an accompliſhment in a comprehenſive plan of education, will find all the neceſſary lights in the volumes of Grotius, Puffendorf, Bourne, and Blackſtone.

He who wiſhes to gain a complete knowledge of grammar, may ſucceed in his attempt without loading his memory with the works of Priſcian, or of Deſpauterius, or of thoſe thouſands who have toiled in this circumſcribed province. Let him, after having ſtudied the elements of Latin and Greek, digeſt the Hermes of Harris, and the Introduction of Lowth.

The art of rhetoric never yet formed an Engliſh orator. It is one of thoſe artificial aſſiſtances of genius, which genius wants not, and of which dulneſs can little avail itſelf. But as there are excellent books written on it, the general ſcholar muſt pay it his attention. Let him then read Cicero on the Orator, and Quinctilian's Inſtitutes, and he need not

not trouble himſelf with thoſe meagre treatiſes which give a hard name to the natural modes of expreſſion, and teach us that, like Hudibras, we cannot ope our mouths, but out there flies a trope.

He who is impelled by neceſſity or inclination to attend to logic, may with propriety neglect all the rubbiſh of the ſchools, and, next to the Stagyrite himſelf, ſtudy only the works of Saunderſon, Wallis, Watts, and Harris.

If the barren field of metaphyſics is ever capable of repaying the toil of cultivation, it can only be when the attention is confined to ſuch authors as Locke, Hucheſon, and Beattie. If ethics are to be conſidered in the ſyſtematical method of a ſcience, the moral philoſophy of Hucheſon is one of the cleareſt, the moſt elegant, and the conciſeſt treatiſes that have appeared upon them. The numerous writers who have fabricated fanciful and deſtructive ſyſtems, may be ſuffered to ſink in the gulph of oblivion never to emerge.

In natural philoſophy, the airy fabrics of hypothetical viſions claim not the attention of a moment. The ſun of Newton has abſorbed the radiance of all other luminaries. His works and thoſe of his followers will, of courſe, ſuperſede the infinite number of folios, which, to uſe the expreſſions of Horace, may be ſent to wrap up frankincenſe and perfumes, the only way in which they can now be uſeful. He to whom the works of the great philoſopher are unintelligible, may acquieſce with ſecurity in the illuſtrations of Pemberton and Rowning. The lover of natural hiſtory, zoology, and botany, will not be at a loſs in the ſelection of books, while fame reſounds the names of Buffon, of Pennant, of Linnæus. The Romances of Pliny and his imitators will have no charms with the lover of truth.

To the claſſical ſcholar the proper books are pointed out by the ſuperintendants of his education; and when once he has taſted them, his own cultivated

tivated feelings will direct him in the choice of modern productions. Every one knows who were the best authors in the Augustan age; and the chief caution necessary is, that the text of a Virgil, a Horace, an Ovid, may not be lost in the attention given to the tedious comments of a few Dutchmen. I have known those who have toiled through the classics, *cum notis variorum*, much less acquainted with them than he who never read them but in Sandby's edition. In attending to Burman and Heinsius, they overlooked the text; which was lost like a jewel in a dunghill. These laborious annotators explain what needs not explanation, and, with a little critical knavery, pass by a real difficulty without notice. I am convinced that a taste for the classics is rather impeded than promoted by the Dauphin edition, in which boys are initiated; but in which the words of the author are choaked, like wholesome plants among weeds, by the notes and interpretation. To be possessed of

comments on the claſſics is deſirable, for difficulties will occur which at firſt ſight perplex the moſt ingenious; but I ſhould prefer, for common reading, ſuch editions as that of Jones's Horace.

Directions for the formation of the lady's library have often been wanted by thoſe, who, with an inclination for the elegant amuſement of reading, have been unable to indulge it without danger, becauſe they had none to guide them in their choice. In my humble opinion, the following books might have a place in it, not only without hazard of ill conſequences, but with great advantage to taſte, and to that perſonal beauty which ariſes from mental. All the periodical publications of repute that have been written on the model of the Spectator, Rollin's Works, Plutarch's Lives, Shakeſpeare, Milton, Pope, and the moſt eſteemed hiſtorians of their own country, may be ſtrongly recommended. To theſe, for the ſake of imbibing a claſſical taſte, may be added the beſt tranſlations of the

antients,

antients, Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, and Melmoth's Pliny. If French books are required, thoſe of Boileau, Fontenelle, Le Pluche, and ſome ſelect pieces of Voltaire and Rouſſeau, may with propriety be admitted. Novels, it is feared, will not be diſpenſed with. Thoſe then of Richardſon and Fielding are allowed, yet not without reluctance. Every thing indelicate will of courſe be excluded; but perhaps there is not leſs danger in the ſentimental work. It attacks the heart more ſucceſsfully, becauſe more cautiouſly. Religious books will find a place, but not without reſtriction. For there is a ſpecies of devotional compoſition, which, by inflaming the paſſions and imagination, contributes to corruption, while it ſeems to promote the warmeſt piety. From their ſenſibility of heart and warmth of fancy, the ſofter ſex is ſuppoſed to be moſt inclined to admit the errors of the myſtics.

That virtuoſo taſte in books, which regards little elſe in them but the

dates and names and colophons of their printers, is unworthy genius. If an edition is tolerably correct, if the type is ſufficiently large and diſtinct, if the paper is white, and the ſize portable, it matters not whether it was printed by Elzevir, Plantin, at Oxford, at Cambridge, or in Little-Britain. The price often given for a ſingle ſet, by thoſe who have unfortunately contracted this taſte, would furniſh a moderate library with a uſeful collection. The exact knowledge of editions, on which many of the learned pride themſelves, though it may honourably diſtinguiſh an inhabitant of Paternoſter-row, is an accompliſhment by no means fit to render the liberal ſcholar juſtly oſtentatious. A paſſion for curious books, without a wiſh to read them, reſembles another unreaſonable propenſity, which hoards up the money it deſires not to uſe.

Still more abſurd is the taſte for ſplendid binding. Books are now ſo delicately covered, that the poſſeſſor fears

fears to read them, leſt they ſhould contract a ſpot. They are become, in many houſes, merely ornamental furniture; and it is matter of wonder that the bookſeller is applied to for it, ſince it is certain, that a room might be fitted up with it as elegantly, and at a much more reaſonable rate, by the cabinet-maker.

ESSAY XXXII.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF FASHION.

THEY who are exempted by their elevated condition from the confinement of commercial and profeſſional life, involve themſelves in voluntary ſlavery by engaging in the ſervice of the tyrant faſhion. Actions in themſelves pleaſing and innocent, they are compelled to abſtain from, however ſtrong their inclination, becauſe the caprice of ſome diſtinguiſhed character has prohibited them by his example. Like the dulleſt of animals, they are driven round the ſame circle, from which once to deviate would ſubject them to an appellation of all others the moſt formidable. To be called profligate, extravagant, intem-

intemperate, or even wicked, might be tolerated with patience; but who could bear to live with the epithet of ungenteel?

People of faſhion, once admitted to this honourable title, form a little world of their own, and learn to look down upon all others as beings of a ſubordinate nature. It is then a natural queſtion, In what does this ſuperiority conſiſt? It ariſes not from learning, for the moſt illiterate claim it, and are indulged in the claim; it ariſes not from virtue, for the moſt vicious are not excluded. Wealth, beauty, birth, and elegance, are not the only qualifications for it, becauſe many enjoy it who have no juſt pretenſion to either. It ſeems to be a combination of numbers, who agree to imitate each other, and to maintain, by the majority of voices and the effrontery of pride, that all they do is proper, and all they ſay is ſenſible; that their dreſs is becoming, their manners polite, their houſes taſteful, their furniture, their carriages, all that appertains to them,

them, the very quinteſſence of real beauty. Thoſe who come not within the pale of their juriſdiction, they condemn with papal authority to perpetual inſignificance. They ſtigmatiſe them by wholeſale, as people whom nobody knows, as the ſcum of the earth, as born only to miniſter to their pride, and to ſupply the wants of their luxury.

Groundleſs as are the pretenſions of this confederacy, no pains are avoided to become an adopted member. For this, the ſtripling ſquanders his patrimony, and deſtroys his conſtitution. For this, the virgin bloom of innocence and beauty is withered at the vigils of the card-table. For this, the loſs of integrity, and public infamy, are willingly incurred; and it is agreed by many, that it were better to go out of the world, than to live in it and be unfaſhionable.

If this diſtinction is really valuable, and if the happineſs or miſery of life depends upon obtaining or loſing it, then

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are the thouſands who walk the private path of life*, objects of the ſincereſt pity. Some conſolation muſt be deviſed for the greater part of the community who have never breathed the atmoſphere of St. James's, nor embarraſſed their fortunes, nor ruined their health, in purſuit of this glorious elevation. Perhaps on an impartial review it will appear, that theſe are really poſſeſſed of that happineſs which vanity would arrogate to itſelf, and yet only ſeems to obtain.

The middle ranks of mankind are the moſt virtuous, the beſt-accompliſhed, and the moſt capable of enjoying the pleaſures and advantages which fall to the lot of human nature. It is not the leaſt of theſe, that they are free from the neceſſity of attending to thoſe formalities which engroſs the attention and waſte the time of the higher claſſes, without any adequate return of ſatisfaction. Horace, who was far leſs illuſ-

* ——— fallentis ſemita vitæ.

HOR.

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trious by his birth and ſtation, than by his elegance of manners, was wont to congratulate himſelf, that he could ride on a little mule to the remoteſt town of Italy without ridicule or moleſtation; while his patrons could hardly move a ſtep, but with the unwieldy pomp of an equipage and retinue. The ſingle article of dreſs, which, when ſplendid, requires the labour and attention of many hours, becomes a wretched taſk to thoſe who wiſh to employ their time with honour, with improvement, with pleaſure, and the poſſibility of a ſatisfactory retroſpection.

Viſits of form, of which every one complains, yet to which every one in ſome meaſure ſubmits, are abſolutely neceſſary to keep up the union of the faſhionable confederacy. The more numerous, the more honourable. To be permitted to ſpend five minutes, or to leave a card at the houſes of half the inhabitants of the politer ſtreets, is a felicity which compenſates for all the

the trouble of attendance and tedious preparation. To behold a train of coaches, ſome perhaps with coronets on their ſides, crowding to their door; to hear the fulminations of a ſkilful footman, are joys of which the inhabitant of a rural retreat has little conception, but which delightfully affect the fine feelings of thoſe who are made of purer clay, and honoured with the name of faſhionable.

From this ſevere perſecution, the man who aſpires not at ſuch honours is happily free. He viſits his friend, becauſe he feels friendly ſentiments for him, and is received with cordiality. The intervals of company he can devote to ſtudy, and to the purſuit of buſineſs and amuſement; for his communications with his friends require not all the preparatory trouble of faſhionable formality. In the unreſerved pleaſures of converſation, he looks with reciprocal pity on the club at Almack's, nor envies thoſe who knock at an hundred doors in an evening, and who have the privilege of ſitting half an hour in company

pany where profeſſion ſupplies the place of ſincerity.

The effects of faſhion conſtitute very wonderful phœnomena in the moral world. It can transform deformity to beauty, and beauty to deformity. When we view the dreſſes in a picture-gallery, we are tempted to ridicule the ſhocking taſte of our grandfathers and grandmothers; and yet there is not the leaſt doubt but they appeared beautiful and becoming when they were worn, and that the garb of the ſpectator who now cenſures them, would have been then equally ridiculous. During the ſhort period of a life, the fluctuations of taſte are ſtrikingly remarkable. A ſmall buckle or a large buckle, a ſhort coat or a long coat, a high or low head-dreſs, appear in their turns, in the courſe of only a few years, laughably abſurd. Manners, books, poetry, painting, building, gardening, undergo a ſimilar alteration. The prevailing taſte is at the time ſuppoſed to be the perfect taſte; a few years paſs, and it is exploded as monſtrous; a new one is adopted; that is alſo ſoon deſpiſed,

and the old one, in the capricious viciſſitudes of the innovating ſpirit, is revived once more to go through the ſame revolutions.

There is certainly a ſtandard of rectitude in manners, decorum, and taſte; but it is more eaſily diſcovered than preſerved. The vanity of the great and opulent will ever be affecting new modes, in order to increaſe that notice to which it thinks itſelf entitled. The lower ranks will imitate them as ſoon as they have diſcovered the innovation. Whether right or wrong, beautiful or deformed, in the eſſential nature of things, is of little moment. The pattern is ſet by a ſuperior, and authority will at any time countenance abſurdity. A hat, a coat, a ſhoe deemed fit to be worn only by a great grandſire, is no ſooner put on by a Lord than it becomes graceful in the extreme, and is generally adopted from the firſt Lord of the treaſury to the apprentice in Houndſditch.

It muſt be allowed, indeed, that while faſhion exerts her arbitrary power in mat-

ters which tend not to the corruption of morals, or of taſte in the fine arts, ſhe may be ſuffered to rule without limitation. But the misfortune is, that ſhe will, like other potentates, encroach on provinces where her juriſdiction is uſurped. The variations ſhe is continually introducing in dreſs, are of ſervice in promoting commerce. The whims of the rich feed the poor. The variety and the reſtleſſneſs cauſed by the changes in the modes of external embelliſhment, contribute to pleaſe and employ thoſe whoſe wealth and perſonal inſignificance prevent them from finding more manly objects and more rational entertainment. But when the ſame caprice which gives law to the wardrobe extends itſelf to the library; when the legiſlator of an aſſembly dictates in the ſchools, regulates religion, and directs education, it is time that reaſon ſhould vindicate her rights againſt the encroachments of folly.

Yet ſo faſcinating is the influence of general example, that they who poſſeſs reaſon in its moſt improved ſtate, are

known to follow faſhion with blind obedience. The ſcholar and the philoſopher is hurried away with the rapidity of the torrent. To ſtand ſingular, is to preſent a mark for the ſhafts of ſcorn and malevolence. For the ſake of eaſe, therefore, men are induced to join the throng, which they muſt reſiſt without ſucceſs, but not without receiving injury in the conflict. Compliance is wiſdom where oppoſition is inefficacious.

With reſpect to the diſtinction claimed by people of faſhion, it is certain that they who are elevated by ſtation, fortune, and a correſpondent education, are often diſtinguiſhed by a peculiar elegance of manners reſulting from their improvements. But this ought not to inſpire pride, or teach them to ſeparate from the reſt of mankind. It ſhould give them a ſpirit of benevolence, and lead them to promote the happineſs of others, in return for the goodneſs of providence in beſtow-

ing on them ſuperior advantages, without any merit of their own. They ſhould be convinced, that the warmeſt philanthropiſt is the trueſt gentleman.

ESSAY XXXIII.

ON FEMALE LITERATURE.

SIR,

I AM the only daughter of a clergyman, who, on the death of my mother, which happened when I was about three years old, concentered his affections in me, and thought he could not diſplay his love more effectually than in giving me a good education. His houſe was ſituated in a ſolitary village, and he had but little parochial duty, ſo that there was ſcarcely any thing to take off his attention from this object. He had ever been devoted to letters, and conſidered learning, next to virtue, as the nobleſt diſtinction of human nature.

As ſoon as I could read, I was initiated in Lilly's Grammar, and, before I was eight years old, could repeat every rule in it with the greateſt accuracy. I was taught indeed all kinds of needle-work; but two hours in every day were invariably ſet apart for my improvement in Latin. I ſoon perfected myſelf in the elementary parts, and had read Phædrus and Cornelius Nepos with a ſtrict attention to the grammatical conſtruction of every word and phraſe they contained. From theſe I was advanced to Virgil and Horace. Under the direction of ſo good a claſſic as my father, I ſoon acquired a taſte for their beauties, and not only read them through with great delight, but committed their more beautiful paſſages to memory.

My father was ſo well pleaſed with my proficiency, and with the taſk of inſtructing the object of his tendereſt love, that he reſolved to carry my improvements higher, and to open to my view the ſpacious fields of Grecian literature.

literature. The Greek Grammar I maſtered with great eaſe, and I found a ſweetneſs in the language which amply repaid me for the little difficulties I ſometimes encountered. From the Greek Teſtament I went on to read the Cyropædia of Xenophon, the Orations of Demoſthenes, the Dialogues of Plato, and the Iliad and Odyſſey of Homer. That I received great improvement from this courſe, cannot be denied; but the pleaſure of it alone was to me a ſufficient reward. I was enabled to drink at the fountain-head, while others were obliged to content themſelves with the diſtant and polluted ſtream. I found that no tranſlations whatever, however accurately they might exhibit the ſenſe of originals, could expreſs the beauties of the language. I was poſſeſſed of a power of inſpecting thoſe volumes, in admiration of which the world has long agreed, but from which my ſex has for the moſt part been unreaſonably excluded. It was a noble privilege, and I valued

myſelf upon it; but I hope and believe I did not deſpiſe thoſe who had not partaken of it ſolely for want of opportunities.

The French and Italian languages became eaſy after my acquaintance with the Latin, and my father was of opinion that they are indiſpenſably neceſſary to the modern ſcholar. In French I read Rollin, Boileau, Fontenelle, Voiture, Bouhours, Bruyere, Rouſſeau, Voltaire, and Marmontel; in Italian, Petrarch, Taſſo, Arioſto, Guicciardin, and the Cortegiano of Caſtiglio. All theſe gave me a degree of pleaſure, which I am ſure none would be without, who are capable of obtaining it.

After having laid a foundation in the languages, which I believe is ſeldom done with ſucceſs but at an early age, my father allowed me to feaſt without controul on the productions of my own country. The learning I had acquired enabled me to read them critically, and to underſtand all their alluſions. The beſt writers abound ſo much in quotations,

tions, that I cannot help thinking that they who are unacquainted with the antient languages, muſt often be chagrined at their inability to unlock the concealed treaſure.

All the claſſical poets from Shakeſpeare to Pope were my ſtudy and delight. Hiſtory, which my father always recommended as peculiarly ſuited to adorn the female mind, was a favourite purſuit. I digeſted Hume and Robertſon, and took a pleaſure in every biographical anecdote I could collect. After reading a life, or the hiſtory of any particular event, I was always deſired to give my ſentiments upon it in writing; an exerciſe which I found to be attended with great advantage.

I never penetrated deeply into the ſciences, yet I could not reſt ſatisfied without a ſuperficial knowledge of aſtronomy, of the ſolar ſyſtem, of experimental philoſophy, and of geography mathematical, phyſical, and political. This little was neceſſary for rational converſation, and I had neither time nor

nor taſte for ſcientific refinements. Poetry was my delight, and I ſometimes wrote it, as the partiality of my poor father led him to aſſert, in a pleaſing manner.

I do not make it a merit of my own, becauſe it was entirely owing to my father's direction, that with all my attention to books, I did not neglect the ornamental accompliſhments. My father excelled in muſic, and he taught me to play on the harpſichord. He engaged a good maſter to inſtruct me in dancing; and he always cautioned me againſt that neglect of dreſs and extreme cleanlineſs, which, he ſaid, had ſometimes involved literary ladies in deſerved diſgrace. He likewiſe inculcated the neceſſity of avoiding a pedantic manner of converſation, and ſtrictly charged me never to be overbearing, or to ſhew in the company of others the leaſt appearance of conſcious ſuperiority. I believe I may venture to ſay, that I complied with his directions, and that I talked with perfect

ſect eaſe among the ſuperficial, and neither expreſſed nor felt contempt, except where vanity and affectation were combined with ignorance.

Yet notwithſtanding my improvements and my earneſt endeavours to prevent them from becoming invidious, I find myſelf received in the world with leſs cordiality than I had reaſon to expect. My own ſex ſtand too much in awe of me to bear me any affection. When I come into their company, an univerſal ſilence would prevail, if it were not interrupted by myſelf. Though I cannot ſay that I am treated rudely, yet I can eaſily perceive that the civilities I receive are conſtrained; and I have every reaſon to believe, that no ſmall pains are taken to traduce my character, and to ridicule my taſte in dreſs, and all the circumſtances of external behaviour. It is kindly hinted, that a little aukwardneſs and impropriety may be excuſed in a learned lady, and that dreſs and decorum are beneath the notice of a poeteſs.

I have

I have no reaſon to think that my perſon is particularly diſagreeable, yet, I know not how it is, I am avoided by gentlemen who are ambitious of the company of other ladies. They have dropt, in the hearing of ſome of my friends, that though they think me extremely clever, yet they cannot reconcile the ideas of female attractions and the knowledge of the Greek. They do not mean to detract from my praiſe, but they muſt own, that I am not the woman after their hearts. They entertain a notion, that a lady of improved underſtanding will not ſubmit to the leſs dignified cares of managing a houſehold. She knows how to make verſes, ſays the witling, but give me the woman who can make a pudding.

I muſt confeſs, I ever thought it the moſt valuable recommendation of a wife to be capable of becoming a converſible companion to her huſband; nor did I ever conceive that the qualifications of a cook-maid, a laundreſs, or a houſekeeper, were the moſt deſirable accompliſhments

pliſhments in a partner for life. A woman of improved underſtanding and real ſenſe is more likely to ſubmit to her condition, whatever it may be, than the uneducated or the half-learned; and ſuch an one will always be willing to ſuperintend œconomy when it becomes her duty; and to take an active part in houſehold management, when the happineſs of him ſhe loves, and of herſelf, depends upon her perſonal interference.

The education of children in the earlier periods, particularly of daughters, naturally belongs to the mother. Her inclination to improve them, ſeconded by her ability to take the proper methods, muſt be attended with the moſt valuable effects. The world is acquainted with the happy conſequences of a Cornelia's parental care. But it ſeems probable, that little nouriſhment of mind can be imbibed from a mother whoſe ideas hardly ever wandered beyond the limits either of a kitchen or of a dreſſing-room. Neither is there ſufficient reaſon to conclude, that ſhe

whoſe intellectual acquiſitions enable her to entertain her huſband, and to form the minds of her children, muſt be incapable or unwilling to ſuperintend the table, and give a perſonal attention to domeſtic œconomy.

That learning belongs not to the female character, and that the female mind is not capable of a degree of improvement equal to that of the other ſex, are narrow and unphiloſophical prejudices. The preſent times exhibit moſt honourable inſtances of female learning and genius in a Montagu, a Chapone, and a Carter. The ſuperior advantages of boys education is, perhaps, the ſole reaſon of their ſubſequent ſuperiority. Learning is equally attainable, and, I think, equally valuable, to the woman as the man. For my own part, I would not loſe the little I poſſeſs, to avoid all thoſe diſagreeable conſequences of which I have juſt now complained.

ESSAY XXXIV.

ON PARENTAL INDULGENCE.

Utinam liberorum mores non ipſi perderemus. Infantiam ſtatim deliciis ſolvimus. Mollis illa educatio, quam indulgentiam vocamus, nervos omnes et mentis et corporis frangit. . . . . Diſcunt hæc miſeri antequam ſciant vitia eſſe: inde ſoluti ac fluentes, non accipiunt e ſcholis mala illa, ſed in ſcholas afferunt.

QUINTILIAN.

THE love of progeny* ſeems to operate as ſtrongly in the brute creation as in the human ſpecies, during the helpleſs age of immaturity. The guidance of inſtinct, indeed, as it is more deciſively determinate, ſeems to bring up an offſpring with leſs de-

* Στοργη.

viation

viation from the purpoſes of nature, than the ſuperior faculty of reaſon. The greater acuteneſs of reaſon leads to heſitation, and involves in error, while it is diſtracted by the variety of objects it aſſembles for its choice. The bird never injures its young by repletion. The young, indeed, of few animals, when left to the care of the parent, without the interference of man, is found to periſh. But it is well known how large a proportion of children die under the age of two years, in our metropolis. The cauſe is in general the neglect of nature for the aids of art, proceeding from a degree of fondneſs which ſtimulates the parent to take all the care upon herſelf, and to leave little to the inviſible proceſs of natural energies.

If the child ſurvive by the vigour of its conſtitution to a puerile age, even then the fondneſs of the parent, moſt amiable in its origin, but moſt injurious to the object it moſt wiſhes to benefit, is found to deſtroy the very purpoſes of

of living, by endeavouring to render life pleaſurable to exceſs, and without viciſſitude. If his abſence can be ſo far borne as to permit him to enter at a ſchool, an earneſt deſire is expreſſed that he may be indulged in all thoſe luxuries of the table which pollute the pure ſtream of the infant blood, and, by overloading the organs of intellect, preclude the poſſibility of ſolid improvement. He whoſe attention ſhould be engroſſed by his book, and who ſhould learn at firſt to look on every pleaſure of the ſenſes as a ſubordinate pleaſure, is taught by the overweening attachment of a parent, to have little other care than for the pampering of the groſſeſt among the animal appetites. It is ſeldom the firſt queſtion, whether the ſuperintendant of a ſeminary is ingenious or careful; but whether his table is ſupplied with dainties, and ſet out with the artificial additions of pride and gluttony?

Regularity of diet, and modeſt decency in all the circumſtances of ſcholaſtic

life, are often repreſented as the reſult of ſparing œconomy; and the young pupil no ſooner returns, in the days of vacation, to his paternal roof, than he is crammed with delicacies to compenſate for the penance he has undergone at the place of his education. He is even rewarded and careſſed for the calumnies he invents againſt the prudence and œconomy of his abſent inſtructor.

We can derive but little improvement from the teacher we contemn. Yet how can the boy avoid contempt for the inſtructor, whom he is taught to conſider as totally regardleſs of any thing but his own ſordid intereſt, and capable of depriving the child committed to his care of his proper ſuſtenance? But they who are ſenſible in other reſpects, are rendered, by their fondneſs, weak enough to believe any calumny which a wayward child utters for the ſake of changing his place of education, or of remaining at home.

The propenſity to indulgence is ſo ſtrong, that at the matureſt age, and with

with the moſt improved reaſon, it is difficult to reſtrain it within the limits of moderation. To encourage inſtead of checking this natural tendency, is, in effect, to nurſe thoſe vices of the future youth, and to cauſe thoſe exceſſes of early manhood, which in the end haſten the grey hairs of the inconſiderate parent with ſorrow to the grave. Few would be profligate in the extreme, if they were not untaught all the virtue they learn under their tutors, by the example and inadvertence of their own family. When immorality is obliquely recommended by a father's practice, the infection is irreſiſtible. A tutor's admonitions are ſoon ſuppoſed to proceed merely from official care, when they contradict the conduct of him whom a child naturally venerates above all others.

The general cuſtom of allowing a conſiderable weekly ſtipend, and of giving pecuniary preſents to the ſchoolboy, often fruſtrates the intentions of education. It is not likely that he ſhould

give his attention to literary improvement, who is obliged to ſtudy how he ſhall ſpend the bounty of his aunts and couſins; and whoſe pocket always enables him to find recreation without ſeeking it in books. It would be happy if things could be ſo contrived, that, for want of employment, he ſhould be driven to thoſe volumes where employment of the ſweeteſt kind may be always found, attended with the moſt valuable advantages. A profuſion of money at a childiſh age is alſo not uncommonly the cauſe of ſubſequent extravagance, and tends to introduce one of the moſt pernicious and leaſt curable vices, a propenſity to gaming. But reaſoning can avail little againſt the partiality of a grandmother, who cannot ſuffer preſent pleaſure to be neglected by her favourite for the ſake of an advantage diſtant and uncertain.

It is uſually ſuppoſed that maternal affection is ſtronger than paternal. There is no doubt but that it often interpoſes in adjuſting the plan of education.

Its kind ſolicitude is too amiable to be cenſured with aſperity. Yet we muſt aſſert, that it is not poſſible that a mother, though ſenſible and accompliſhed, ſhould be ſo well qualified to direct the care of a boy's education in all its parts, as a father of equal abilities. All the important departments in civil life are filled by men. The pulpit, the bar, the ſenate-houſe, are appropriated to men. Men, from the facility with which they travel, and their ſuperior hardineſs, ſee more of the world than women; who, with the ſame opportunities, might indeed make the ſame obſervations; but who, in the preſent ſtate of things, cannot judge of thoſe qualifications, attainments, manners, and characters, which recommend to notice in all the profeſſions of life, and tend to ſecure ſucceſs. Hence it is that they are obſerved to ſet a high value on ornamental accompliſhments, of the grace of which their fine taſte is peculiarly ſenſible; and to undervalue the more ſolid attainments, with the utility and

beauty of which their ſituation keeps them unacquainted. Many a fond and ſenſible mother has controverted the neceſſity of learning Latin, as a dead language, in which there can be no uſe while the living languages of France and Italy are more eaſily attainable, and infinitely more faſhionable. Such a judgment is not to be wondered at; nor does it proceed from natural weakneſs, but from an unavoidable unacquaintance with the charms of the claſſics, and the utility of Latin in the practice of every liberal art, in the converſation of the enlightened, and in the ſtudy of the moſt admired modern books, which abound in Latin quotations, in alluſions to the claſſics, and in words which cannot be fully underſtood without underſtanding the language from which they are derived.

Add to this, that the extreme tenderneſs of maternal affection will not permit that ſtrict diſcipline to be exerciſed on a beloved ſon, which, though it has nothing in it of harſh ſeverity, reſembles

reſembles not the ſoft and indulgent treatment of the domeſtic nurſery. Scarcely any thing of value is brought to perfection without ſome care analogous to this of ſcholaſtic diſcipline. The tree will not produce its fruits in ſufficient abundance, or with a proper flavour, unleſs it is chaſtiſed in its luxuriances by the hand of art. It is requiſite that the ſtubborn ſoil ſhould be broken by cultivation. The moſt ſerviceable animals are either uſeleſs or hurtful, till reduced to obedience by coercion. Man, above all, poſſeſſed as he is of ſtronger powers and acuter perceptions, of ill qualities no leſs than good, in a ſuperior degree, requires all the aids of art to correct his enormities, and teach him to act a rational and conſiſtent part in the theatre of the world. Although the infliction of ſalutary diſcipline may give pain, even to thoſe who know it to be ſalutary, yet they muſt not, for the ſake of ſparing their own feelings, act in contradiction to their judgment, and do an irreparable

injury to thoſe whom they moſt tenderly love. Exceſſive lenity and indulgence is ultimately exceſſive rigour.

With the excellent effects of Spartan diſcipline, every one is acquainted. Of the lamentable conſequences of modern relaxation, daily experience furniſhes examples. The puerile age is patient and tractable. Reformation muſt begin there. Temperance, diligence, modeſty, and humility, cannot be too early inculcated. Theſe will lead through the temple of virtue to the temple of honour. In this progreſs, ſtrict diſcipline will ſometimes be neceſſary; but let not the pretence of proper correction give an oportunity for the gratification of vindictive cruelty. Inhumanity even in a BUSBY cannot admit of palliation.

ESSAY XXXV.

ON THE ILL EFFECTS OF PROVING BY ARGUMENT TRUTHS ALREADY ADMITTED.

Perſpicuitas enim argumentatione elevatur.

Cic.

SIR,

I HAVE reaſon to think that I inherited from nature a plain underſtanding, without any pretenſions to the vivacity of genius. I am grateful to my parents that it was cultivated in that common way which guides through the beaten path of life, and leads not to thoſe eccentricities, which, for the moſt part, terminate in miſery.

I was

I was deſtined to a mercantile life, and my education was therefore confined to writing, arithmetic, and a little elementary Latin acquired at the Grammar-ſchool. With my ſteadineſs of conduct, there was little difficulty in acquiring a competency in the trade in which I was ſettled by my father. As I had no family, and was free from avarice and ambition, I retired early from the ſmoke and hurry of the town to a ſweet little houſe and garden on the borders of Epping-foreſt.

A ſtate of total inaction both of body and mind, I found leſs tolerable than the conſtant buſtle of a town life. To my garden I had recourſe for exerciſe. For rural ſports I was unqualified, as I had never fired a gun or mounted a horſe. My garden, however, amuſed me ſufficiently, contributed to confirm my health, and, at the ſame time, induced a contemplative turn. This led me to ſeek, in books, a ſupply for the loſs of that ſucceſſion of objects which had ſo long ſolicited and engroſſed my

attention in the great ſtreets of the capital.

The courſe of reading into which I fell, might have proved hurtful, had I not been diſcreet enough to correct its tendency in time. At beſt, it only ſerved to fill up thoſe hours, which might, indeed, have been more agreeably and more uſefully employed.

I had received all the notions uſually inſtilled by parental authority, with implicit belief. I was told that there was one God, and I believed it, for I ſaw his works around me. I embraced revealed religion in all its parts, with the ſame evidence of conviction with which I believed the ſun to exiſt in the heavens, when I beheld its radiance, and felt its warmth. I ſaw and believed the difference between right and wrong, vice and virtue, juſtice and injuſtice, as ſtrongly as the difference between black and white, and ſweet and bitter. I never dreamt of calling in queſtion the authenticity of the ſcriptural writers, the doctrine of the trinity, the divinity of

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our Saviour, the immateriality and immortality of the human ſoul, and the reſurrection of the body. When I repeated the creed, I ſpoke with the ſame confidence of undoubting conviction, as when I aſſerted the truth of a fact of which I had ocular demonſtration. The ſteady light of common ſenſe had guided me, and I had been humble enough to follow its directions.

It was now at laſt that I perceived the firſt ſhadow of a doubt on theſe ſubjects, and it was cauſed by the following circumſtances. In collecting my little library, I often met with books entitled Proofs and Demonſtrations of thoſe important points on which I entertained not a ſingle idea of uncertainty; but I was now naturally led to conclude, that thoſe things were not indiſputably evident, of which ſo many laboured proofs were continually offered to the public notice. My curioſity was raiſed, and I began to ſuſpect, that it was owing to my ſimplicity alone that I had hitherto received, without proof,

all

all thoſe doctrines of which the world ſeemed to require the moſt powerful defence, and confirmations infinitely repeated.

The bare appearance of an attempt to prove opinions which I had ever conſidered as wanting no other proof than the firſt ſtrong deciſions of common ſenſe, ſhook the ſtability of my conviction. Hitherto my days had been tranquil and ſecure. All my principles in morality and religion had been planted in infancy, and had taken root deep and ſtrong. My underſtanding had not been actively ingenious enough to overturn thoſe ſyſtems of my forefathers which had led them through the ways of piety to peace. But I now found my happineſs begin to totter, as my principles began to be undermined.

In the books which were every day offered for the converſion of ſceptics, for refuting atheiſts, for proving chriſtianity, for demonſtrating that there is a difference between good and evil, for aſſerting that

that there is ſome eſſential ſuperiority in the human nature over the animal, I found no remedy in my unſettled ſtate, but, on the contrary, an increaſing tendency to univerſal ſcepticiſm. The ingenious authors of ſuch treatiſes find it neceſſary to raiſe objections in order to remove them, to give a degree of weight and ſolidity to the arguments of their adverſaries, that the weight and ſolidity of their own victorious arguments may be rendered more conſpicuous and more honourable.

The books of the objectors I ſhould never have read; nor ſhould I have known any thing of their objections, had I not been enſnared into an acquaintance with the enemies of truth by the ill-judged conduct of her friends. Hereſies and errors long forgotten and exploded were revived by theſe, merely to diſplay their ingenuity in refutation. Sometimes, through the weakneſs of their judgment, they gave advantage to ſophiſtry, and by throwing with a feeble hand

hand a pointleſs dart*, encouraged a defeated foe to reſume new courage.

Even in the moſt judicious apologies for thoſe doctrines which I thought wanted no apology, though the arguments were concluſive, I did not perceive that my conviction was ſtrengthened, but, on the contrary, that it was in ſome degree leſs clear than before I had received argumentative demonſtration. My idea of the truth was at firſt ſimple, and proportionably evident; but when that idea was connected with a long chain of arguments, my underſtanding could not ſo readily comprehend it with all its additional appendages. There is a degree of abſtraction in cloſely reaſoned writings, which is neceſſarily attended with a little obſcurity. And hence it happens that illuſtrations, as they are called, of important truths, are ſometimes the only circumſtances which involve them in darkneſs.

* ——— telum imbelle ſine ictu.

VIRG.

Whatever

Whatever complaints have been made againſt the prevalence of infidelity in this age, and however true they may be of the higher or diſſipated orders, it is yet certain, that the chriſtian religion is implicitly received by the greater part of the community. Though their practice, from the infirmity of human nature, is ſeldom correſpondent with their principles, yet they are far from the character of ſpeculative infidels. It is at leaſt highly probable, that all who frequent the eſtabliſhed churches are chriſtians. It has therefore been matter of juſt ſurpriſe, that a great number of the moſt ingenious divines ſhould enter the pulpit, as if they were to convert a congregation of heathens or deiſts. To prove, by a great variety of laboured arguments, the exiſtence of God, is ſurely unneceſſary before an audience, whoſe convention in a church is a proof that they already believe it. It can have little other effect than to lull them aſleep, or to ſuggeſt ſcruples inſtead of removing them. For it is certain,

certain, that not half thoſe arguments in ſupport of ſcepticiſm have uſually fallen within the notice of the common hearer, which are for the moſt part adduced, in order to be refuted, by a ſubtile diſputant in divinity. A few good treatiſes might properly enough be written by the truly able, to ſhew the ſophiſtry of a deiſtical author, and then he and his lucubrations might be ſuffered to paſs on to oblivion; whither they would glide with a rapid courſe, if they were not impeded by the imprudent interference of thoſe, who in reality muſt wiſh to accelerate their extinction.

Neither polemical, controverſial, doctrinal, nor ſyſtematical religion ſeems well calculated to anſwer any of the ends of true religion. The ends of true religion are all friendly and benign. But peace, benevolence, and purity of heart, are, I believe, not at all promoted in thoſe many volumes of theology which have owed their origin to controverſy, and to logical and metaphyſical refinement.

One might almoſt venture to pronounce it a judgment on the temerity and the preſumption of man, that ſcarcely any philoſopher has diſtinguiſhed himſelf by thoſe ſpeculations which were never deſigned to fall within the ſphere of the human intellect, without ſtarting ſome notion abſurd enough to render his memory ridiculous. Berkely, one of the authors on whom I was ſo unfortunate as to fall, and whoſe ſenſe and virtue I venerate, made me laugh when he had demonſtrated to me the non-exiſtence of matter. I happened to meet with him ſoon after I had been reading an author who had proved, ſo far at leaſt as that my poor underſtanding could not refute him, that the human ſoul was material, and periſhed at death. Between them both I found I was, on a ſudden, deprived of both my ſoul and body, without any ſenſible loſs or detriment in either.

Convinced at laſt that common ſenſe, or that ſhare and ſpecies of underſtanding which nature has beſtowed on the

the greater part of men, is the ſafeſt guide to certainty and happineſs, I have laid aſide proofs, demonſtrations, and illuſtrations of all matters ſufficiently proved, demonſtrated, and illuſtrated to the humble mind, by their own internal evidence. And however the learned and the diſputatious may amuſe themſelves in morals and religion with fine-ſpun ſubtilties, I ſhall reſt ſatisfied with the coarſer notions of my forefathers, and make the ſcriptural rule the rule of my thoughts and actions— To do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God.

ESSAY XXXVI.

ON AFFECTATION OF FEMALE LEARNING.

THE moſt attractive beauty of the perſon reſults from the graces of the mind. Delicacy, ſweetneſs, ſenſe, and ſenſibility, ſhining in the eyes, will compenſate for irregularity of features, and will ſooner excite love in a feeling heart, than the beſt formed face and the fineſt complexional hue without expreſſion.

Nature muſt indeed have laid the foundation of theſe amiable qualities in the diſpoſition; but they are by no methods ſo effectually called forth and improved, as by the cultivation of a literary taſte. In an intercourſe with the world, we ſee and feel the diſagreeable paſſions; ſuch

as

as have an effect in diſtorting the countenance, and in giving to the eyes an envious, a proud, a diſdainful, or an artful aſpect; than which nothing is more repugnant to the idea of allurement. Eyes that unfortunately have acquired any of theſe appearances, whatever beauties they may be ſurrounded with, poſſeſs a repellent power, and operate like the baſiliſk. But however wicked the world is, books are for the moſt part ſtill virtuous. Human nature appears in them, in its moſt pleaſing colours. They inſpire generous and tender ſentiments. She who is judiciouſly converſant with them, will find her perſon improving as her mind is informed, and as her heart is enlarged, elevated, and purified. This muſt be a powerful motive for application among the ladies; and they may reſt aſſured, that perſonal and mental beauty, though when ſeparate their dominion is not abſolute, are truly irreſiſtible when combined.

An application to books, however, is often found not to produce any attrac-

tive effects; nor is it to be wondered at, when it is conducted in an injudicious and desultory manner. The advice of friends is at first necessary to point out the kind of books, and the times, the modes, and the degrees of study. Superficial and ill-directed reading tends to inspire the most odious of all vanity, and to occasion a behaviour truly ridiculous.

Sempronia has studied all the Magazines for these ten years past, and has now and then obtained the honour of contributing a little piece to some of her admired miscellanies. This distinction, as she thinks it, has greatly elevated her in her own opinion. She deems it sufficient to emancipate her from the usual decorums of external forms. She talks with an overbearing confidence, which, if she were not excused because she is a professed wit, would be intolerable rudeness. Her attention to the muses has excluded the graces from any share of her notice. If you call upon her in the morning,

you

you find her with ſlipſhod ſhoes, with no apron, with matted hair, a dirty face, a cap awry, and fingers begrimed with ink. If you aſk her in what ſhe is exerciſing her genius, ſhe informs you ſhe is writing a Pindaric ode on ſpring, and is looking in Byſhe's Art of Poetry for a rhyme to trees. It muſt be ſent immediately, ſhe ſays, or it will not be inſerted this month. She hopes, therefore, that ſhe may be excuſed in declining company. Her viſitor has reaſon to rejoice at the diſmiſſion; for the ſight of her, as Swift leſs delicately ſays of Cælia, will operate as an emetic, and the ſmell as a poiſon.

Corinna happened to fall upon ſome of the works of our modern ſceptics. She could not underſtand them perfectly; but ſhe diſcovered enough to be aſſured that ſcepticiſm was ſuppoſed to be a mark of ſuperior ſenſe, of a freedom from thoſe narrow prejudices which enthral the vulgar mind. She cannot therefore talk on common affairs; but when ſhe gets into company with en-

lightened people, ſhe expatiates on the happineſs of poſſeſſing a philoſophical turn, and pities the poor narrow ſouls who go to church and perform all their duties, as they call them, with mechanical regularity, juſt like their great grandmothers. Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Bolingbroke, and Hume, are her oracles. She is dreaded by her own ſex, and indeed voluntarily gives up their ſociety. But the men ſhe thinks more entertaining, more converſible, and leſs ſhackled with prejudices. She imagines herſelf particularly attended to by them; and indeed there are ſome humouriſts who liſten to her converſation, in order to lay up ſtore for ridicule. All who are judges, condemn and diſlike her for entering into ſtudies which have a natural tendency to darken the underſtanding, and to corrupt the heart, and which are peculiarly odious in thoſe who were formed to increaſe the comforts of life, and not to cut them off by diffuſing the gloomy notions of the ſceptic.

It was the misfortune of Fulvia to live next door to a circulating library. In every moment of liſtleſſneſs, the maid was diſpatched for a handful of novels, no matter by whom they were written, or what they were in themſelves, provided they were ſentimental. By an uninterrupted courſe of ſuch reading, ſhe had acquired a taſte for anecdotes, private hiſtory, and all that relates to the effects of love, which, ſhe was led to think, formed the great buſineſs of human life. Her heart had been melted, and pierced, and ſmitten, and wounded, ſo often, that it was at laſt ſo mollified, that ſhe felt the tendereſt ſentiments for every man with little diſtinction. She could not paſs a few moments in a private interview with a male acquaintance, without being conſcious of tender ſentiments for him. She often doubted whether ſhe ought, upon the whole, to rejoice or lament that ſhe was endowed with ſuch extreme ſenſibility. But to be ſure, ſo it was, her poor heart was ſo full of love, that

every

every one who approached might have a ſhare unaſked. Her voice was faint and tremulous; her refinements were elegant to a degree inconceivable. She was hardly fit for this low orb. She was always miſerable, except when pouring out her ſentiments in letters to ſome beloved Eudoxus. She was, in ſhort, too tender, too ſuſceptible, too pure, too elevated, to live in this world; and ſo every body ſaid, till, in evil hour, ſhe ran away with a corporal quartered in the town, and has never been heard of ſince.

Leſbia, when very young, wrote a few rhymes, which, as her age was conſidered, were much applauded by her friends. Fluſhed with praiſe, ſhe conſidered herſelf as a ſecond Sappho, and has ever ſince been devoted to the muſe. Her reading was chiefly confined to the poet's corner in news-papers, and her productions have rivalled her models. She compoſes ænigmas, acroſtics, rebuſſes, and ſongs, for thoſe little red pocket-books which are annually publiſhed for the ladies, and ſhe has had

the honour of gaining the reward for expounding the Prize Riddle. Within the circle of her acquaintance, ſhe is much admired. If a wedding happens among any of them, ſhe pays for her bride-cake with an epithalamium; and ſhe keeps in her drawers, like haberdaſhers wares in a ſhop, odes, elegies, and epigrams, adapted to every occaſion. She had once an offer of being married. Her lover aſked her conſent, and was told, he ſhould wait upon her on ſuch a day. In the mean time ſhe prepared a ſoliloquy in blank verſe, expreſſive of reciprocal affection. The lover waited upon her at the time appointed, but hearing the blank verſe ſpouted with all the vehemence of a player in the fifth act, he concluded his miſtreſs was a mad woman, and dropt his viſits.

Of all ſubjects, politics ſeem the leaſt adapted to the female character. Women are entirely excluded from legiſlative influence, and, it is well known, that public affairs are ſeldom treated with temper, either in writing or converſation.

ſation. But the female politician is by no means uncommon. Cornelia derives all her learning, of which ſhe thinks ſhe poſſeſſes an ample ſhare, from the miſcellaneous volumes of a Say and a Woodfall. She has herſelf ſometimes ventured to communicate a paragraph or two, and has been delighted even to rapture, with the thought, that a plan or conjecture of hers has been wafted throughout the empire by ſo rapid a conveyance. On common ſubjects ſhe is mild and reaſonable; but while the gentlemen are talking politics, ſhe ſubmits with great reluctance to the rule of decorum, which requires that ſhe ſhould pay attention to the ladies. Her colour comes and goes for a long time, till at laſt ſhe can bear it no longer, and burſts out with a blaze of eloquence ſcarcely rivalled in the moſt famous ſchools of oratory, thoſe of Athens or of Billingſgate. A treaty on marriage was on foot ſome time ago; but after the preliminaries were all ſettled, and a day for the ratification of the articles fixed,

fixed, a rupture enſued on the adjuſtment of the balance of power, and hoſtilities have not yet ceaſed, nor is a coalition of the parties likely to take place.

In theſe few inſtances, and in thoſe many which obſervation of the world will ſupply, there ſeems to have been an original fund of parts, and a love of books, which, properly directed, would have led to great improvements. But vague induſtry and unguided emulation, ſtimulated to perſiſt in a wrong path by the partial praiſes of friends and relations, has precipitated even the amiably diſpoſed into unſupported vanity, and cauſed them to diſtinguiſh themſelves without acquiring honour.

To be affected in any way, is at all times, in all places, and in all degrees, to be diſagreeable. But affectation of learning, in a woman with very little merit, draws upon itſelf the contempt and hatred of both ſexes. They who excel moſt in either ſex, are found by experience

experience to be moſt candid and modeſt; to aſſume leaſt, and to join in converſation with others, without diſplaying the ſenſe of ſuperiority. Indeed it often happens, that there is an amiable humility in true genius and learning, which compels the poſſeſſor of them to think diffidently of his own character, amid the united praiſes of all around. Let her who poſſeſſes the bright jewel of learning, take care to ſet it in a plain manner, and its luſtre will become more conſpicuous.

In the embelliſhment of the perſon, a ſufficient degree of care is uſually taken that nothing unbecoming ſhall have a place in it. A regard is paid to age, rank, and every circumſtance which can point out the line of propriety. But in adorning the mind, it is uſual to attend to little elſe but the dictates of inclination. Yet there is certainly a kind of ſexual difference in the minds of the ſexes, which admits and requires a different ſpecies of intellectual accompliſhment.

pliſhment. Œconomy is ſaid, indeed, to be the peculiar province of women; yet ſurely, as rational beings, their reaſon may properly receive the higheſt poſſible cultivation. Nor ſhould their attainments expoſe them to contempt or neglect, unleſs they are ſullied by obtruding arrogance.

ESSAY XXXVII.

ON SPECULATIVE CRITICISM AND ON GENIUS.

Ces ſortes de ſpeculations ne donnent point de genie à ceux qui en manquent; elles n'aident beaucoup ceux qui en ont: et le plus ſouvent même les gens de genie ſont incapables d'être aidées par les ſpeculations. A quoi donc ſont elles bonnes? A faire remonter juſqu'aux premieres idées du beau quelque gens qui aiment la raiſonnement, et ſe plaiſent à reduire ſous l'empire de la philoſophie les choſes qui en paroiſſent le plus indépendantes, et que l'on croit communement abandonnées à la bizarrerie des goûts. FONTENELLE.

—— Mens divinior.—— HOR.

ARISTOTLE was the firſt of thoſe writers who have endeavoured to ſubject taſte to philoſophy. His poetics are almoſt the only parts of his works which continue to be eſteemed with

with a degree of implicit veneration. Mutilated and imperfect as they have come down to us, they yet contain many ſentences pregnant with matter, and which lead the mind into the moſt curious theory. Yet it is certain that they never yet formed a ſingle poet, nor aſſiſted him in any other reſpect than in the mechanical contrivance of a plan; a defect in which is eaſily forgiven, when it is ſupplied by the native charms of genius. Of this our Shakeſpeare is a proof, who, with all his ignorance of ſpeculative criticiſm, wrote in ſuch a manner, as not only to be preferred by thoſe who idoliſe him through prejudice, but by the moſt impartial readers, to Æſchylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*.

Though metaphyſics were ſcarcely ever more exploded than in the preſent times, yet there is a taſte for philoſophical criticiſm particularly preva-

* See an Eſſay on the Writings and Genius of Shakeſpeare, by the truly ingenious Mrs. Montagu.

lent among our thoughtful neighbours in North Britain. Lord Kaims has penetrated deeply to diſcern the cauſe of thoſe emotions, which literary compoſitions are found to produce. He has diſplayed great taſte, great elegance, great reading, and a ſubtilty of enquiry, which muſt have reſulted from unwearied labour, and from a ſingular ſhare of natural ſagacity. But I believe no reader ever found himſelf better able to compoſe, after having peruſed theſe volumes, than before he ſaw them. Nor is it ſaid, that their author, with all his theoretical knowledge of poetry, is himſelf a poet. This is not advanced to detract from his merit; for it is true of Ariſtotle, and of all thoſe writers who, with a genius for logic and metaphyſics, have entered on the provinces of taſte and criticiſm. Dr. Campbell's Philoſophy of Rhetoric is a book of uncommon merit; it is read with great pleaſure and improvement; yet it will be readily owned, that it tends little to form the orator. The author of the

Origin

Origin and Progreſs of Language has diſplayed, as Harris ſays, many judicious and curious remarks on ſtyle, compoſition, language, particularly the Engliſh; obſervations of the laſt conſequence to thoſe who wiſh either to write or to judge with accuracy and elegance. This is certainly true; and yet many have written, and many will write, with accuracy and elegance, without even hearing of this excellent treatiſe.

Moſt of the books which the world has agreed to admire, were compoſed previouſly to the appearance of ſyſtematical and abſtruſe theories of criticiſm, or by authors who, it is well known, paid them no attention. Homer, who is ſtill the beſt heathen author in the world, had neither archetype nor inſtructor. Had his mind been called off from the book of nature, to ſuch ſpeculations as the Stagyrite afterwards fabricated from his noble inventions, there is great reaſon to believe that the Iliad and Odyſſey had long ago gone

whither the coldly correct productions are daily haſtening. Theocritus would have written with much leſs eaſe and ſimplicity, had he read all that critical ingenuity has advanced on paſtoral poetry. The Orations of Demoſthenes, however elaborate, were not formed on the models of profeſſed rhetoricians. No Boſſu had written when Virgil produced his magnificent work. No treatiſes on the ſublime and beautiful had appeared, when Milton poured his majeſtic ſong. Nature, glowing nature, ſuggeſted the exquiſitely fine ideas as they flowed, and left laborious criticiſm to weary herſelf in forming rules and ſyſtems from the unſtudied efforts of her happier temerity.

It muſt not, however, be immediately concluded, that theſe books, which diſplay great ingenuity, are uſeleſs, and the reſult of ill-employed time and talents. They conſtitute a moſt elegant ſpecies of philoſophy. They lead to a knowledge of the human heart, and the operation of the paſſions. They require

require genius of a peculiar kind, the ſubtile and penetrating, and they pleaſe readers who are poſſeſſed of a correſponding taſte. The point which we mean to evince is, that the lover of poetry, of oratory, of all the objects of claſſical taſte, who means to exerciſe himſelf in the compoſition of them, will find himſelf miſtaken in his plan of ſtudy, if he reads ſuch writers as a preparatory diſcipline. Original authors muſt at firſt engroſs his attention; and from theſe, if he is poſſeſſed of abilities, he will inſenſibly catch a portion of fire, with which he will invigorate his own compoſitions; and in conſequence of which, he will be read with pleaſure, though he ſhould not have ſtudied one critical analyſer from Ariſtotle to the lateſt modern.

To learn in what this noble diſtinction of genius conſiſts, has been the ſubject of enquiry. Little ſucceſs has hitherto attended it; for the mind, as it has been often ſaid, like the eye, though it calls up all nature to its view, can-

not procure a ſight of itſelf. With great probability, it has been ſuppoſed that genius is an extraordinary power of attention; a capacity in the mind of attaching itſelf cloſely and ſtrongly, at a glance, to every object that ſolicits its regard; of taking in the whole of it in all its diſtant relations, dependencies, modifications, origin, and conſequences. But after allowing attention to be genius, the queſtion recurs, by what means this attention is cauſed and ſecured. Thus far the name is only changed, and the ſubject is ſtill involved in difficulty.

It is too obviouſly true to be controverted, that there is an eſſential difference in the organization of different men; not merely in the external form, but in the interior ſtructure of the inviſible ſprings which regulate all the animal tendencies and motions. It is highly probable, that a delicate ſyſtem of nerves, or a firmer contexture of them, is better able to obſerve the external world with unerring accuracy, than

than a more callous or a more relaxed aſſemblage of theſe inſtruments of ſenſation. This favourable prediſpoſition of the organs, followed by peculiar opportunities for collecting ideas, and by inducements to impart them to the world, may perhaps conſtitute what we call genius.

There is indeed little doubt, but that ſome kind of genius, or, in other words, ſome peculiar ability to receive a certain train of ideas neceſſary to the practice of ſome art, or to the purſuit of ſome profeſſion, is poſſeſſed by every individual not in a ſtate of idiotiſm. Nature, a kind parent to all her children, has uſually endowed them all with a power of exerting themſelves with ſkill and advantage in ſome way or other. The misfortune has been, that the indications of nature are not always ſufficiently manifeſt to the conductors of education. The deſtination is often neceſſarily fixed before the faculties are arrived at ſufficient ſtrength to point out their propenſity.

Univerſal genius is indeed ſparingly, perhaps never beſtowed. For the preſervation of impartiality, where an excellence is allowed in any remarkable degree, there is often a defect to counterbalance it. Yet in the literary annals of almoſt every nation, we find many diſtinguiſhed by intellectual endowments above the ordinary condition of humanity. It is a noble privilege to excel men in the very perfection by which they excel the irrational animals, and is doubtleſs permitted by providence for the happineſs of mankind. Let it be conſidered as an inſtance, what a train of light has been diffuſed far and wide on thouſands and tens of thouſands, for the ſpace of near two thouſand years, from the illumined underſtanding of the individual Cicero. Or, to take an example from our own poliſhed age and country, let a conjecture be formed of the number of thoſe who have been led to every thing good and great * by an Addiſon.

* εις καλοκαγαθιαν.

The

The world, however, has ſeldom been grateful to its benefactors. It has baniſhed, poiſoned, and crucified them. But there was an inward ſatisfaction in conſcious rectitude, a generous ſpirit in heroic virtue, which bore them through every thing with comfort, and their merit increaſed and triumphed in adverſity.

They who have been poſſeſſed of ſubordinate degrees of genius, have in later times been induced to affect a ſingularity of ſentiment and practice, in order to draw upon themſelves the eyes of mankind. In purſuit of this end, they have adopted vices which their hearts and underſtanding muſt have condemned. Eccentricity has been the object of their wiſhes. Ruin and diſgrace have been the uſual conſequences, and the admiration of others has at laſt been extinguiſhed in compaſſion. Poor man! it has been often exclaimed, he was indeed clever, but he wanted conduct, and he died in goal.

If moral could be combined with mental excellence; if the native vigour of genius could ſubmit to be guided and reſtrained by the deciſions of well conducted art; then might be ſupplied, what none will venture to expect, the two grand deſiderata in morals and literature, a perfect man and a perfect work.

ESSAY XXXVIII.

ON THE SUPERIOR VALUE OF SOLID ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN CICERO AND LORD CHESTERFIELD.

Eſſe quam videri. SALL.

CICERO.

MISTAKE me not. I know how to value the ſweet courteſies of life. Affability, attentions, decorum of behaviour, if they have not been ranked by philoſophers among the virtues, are certainly related to them, and have a powerful influence in promoting ſocial happineſs. I have recommended them, as well as yourſelf. But I contend, and no ſophiſtry ſhall prevail upon me to give up this point, that, to be truly amiable,

amiable, they muſt proceed from goodneſs of heart. Aſſumed by the artful to ſerve the purpoſes of private intereſt, they degenerate to contemptible grimace, and deteſtable hypocriſy.

CHESTERFIELD.

Excuſe me, my dear Cicero; I cannot enter farther into the controverſy at preſent. I have a hundred engagements at leaſt, and ſee yonder my little elegant French Compteſſe. I promiſed her and myſelf the pleaſure of a promenade. Pleaſant walking enough in theſe elyſian groves. So much good company too, that if it were not that the canaille are apt to be troubleſome, I ſhould not much regret the diſtance from the Thuilleries. But adieu, mon cher ami, for I ſee Madame * * * is joining the party. Adieu, adieu!

CICERO.

Contemptible wretch!

CHESTERFIELD.

Ah! what do I hear? Recollect that I am a man of honour, unuſed to the pity

pity or the inſults of an upſtart, a *novus homo*. But perhaps your exclamation was not meant of me—If ſo, why——

CICERO.

I am as little inclined to inſult as to flatter you. Your levity excited my indignation; but my compaſſion for the degeneracy of human nature, exhibited in your inſtance, abſorbs my contempt.

CHESTERFIELD.

I could be a little angry, but, as bienſéance forbids it, I will be a philoſopher for once.—A propos, pray do you reconcile your, what ſhall I call it? your unſmooth addreſs to thoſe rules of decorum, that gentleneſs of manners, of which you ſay you know and teach the propriety as well as myſelf?

CICERO.

To confeſs the truth, I would not advance the arts of embelliſhment to extreme refinement. Ornamental education, or an attention to the graces, has a connection with effeminacy. In acquiring the gentleman, I would not loſe

loſe the ſpirit of a man. There is a gracefulneſs in a manly character, a beauty in an open, ingenuous diſpoſition, which all the profeſſed teachers of the arts of pleaſing know not to infuſe.

CHESTERFIELD.

You and I lived in a ſtate of manners, as different as the periods at which we lived were diſtant. You Romans, pardon me, my dear, you Romans had a little of the brute in you. Come, come, I muſt overlook it. You were obliged to court plebeians for their ſuffrages; and if *ſimilis ſimili gaudet*, it muſt be owned, that the greateſt of you were ſecure of their favour. Why, Beau Naſh would have handed your Catos and your Brutuſes out of the ball-room, if they had ſhewn their unmannerly heads in it; and my Lord Modiſh, animated with the conſcious merit of the largeſt or ſmalleſt buckles in the room according to the temporary ton, would have laughed Pompey the Great out of countenance. Oh, Cicero, had you lived

in

in a modern European court, you would have caught a degree of that undeſcribable grace, which is not only the ornament, but may be the ſubſtitute of all thoſe laboured attainments which fools call ſolid merit. But it was not your good fortune, and I make allowances.

CICERO.

The vivacity you have acquired in ſtudying the writings and the manners of the degenerate Gauls, has led you to ſet too high a value on qualifications which dazzle the lively perceptions with a momentary blaze, and to depreciate that kind of worth which can neither be obtained nor underſtood without ſerious attention, and ſometimes painful efforts. But I will not contend with you on the propriety or impropriety of the outward modes which delight a monkey nation. I will not ſpend arguments in proving that gold is more valuable than tinſel, though it glitters leſs. But I muſt cenſure you, and with an aſperity too,

too, which, perhaps, your graces may not approve, for recommending vice as graceful, in your memorable letters.

CHESTERFIELD.

That the great Cicero ſhould know ſo little of the world, really ſurpriſes me. A little libertiniſm, my dear, that's all; how can one be a gentleman without a little libertiniſm?

CICERO.

I ever thought that to be a gentleman, it was requiſite to be a moral man. And ſurely you, who might have enjoyed the benefit of a light to direct you, which I wanted, were blameable in omitting religion and virtue in your ſyſtem.

CHESTERFIELD.

What! ſuperſtitious too!—You have not then converſed with your ſuperior, the philoſopher of Ferney. I thank heaven, I was born in the ſame age with that great luminary. Prejudice elſe had perhaps enchained me in the thraldom of my great grandmother. Theſe

 are

are enlightened days, and I find I have contributed ſomething to the general illumination, by my poſthumous letters.

CICERO.

Boaſt not of them. Remember you were a father.

CHESTERFIELD.

And did I not endeavour moſt effectually to ſerve my ſon, by pointing out the qualifications neceſſary to a foreign ambaſſador, for which department I always deſigned him? Few fathers have taken more pains to accompliſh a ſon, than myſelf. There was nothing I did not condeſcend to point out to him.

CICERO.

True; your condeſcenſion was great indeed. You were the pandar of your ſon. You not only taught him the mean arts of diſſimulation, the petty tricks which degrade nobility; but you corrupted his principles, fomented his paſſions, and even pointed out objects for their gratification. You might have left the taſk of teaching him faſhionable

vice to a vicious world. Example, and the corrupt affections of human nature, will ever be capable of accompliſhing this unnatural purpoſe. But a parent, the guardian appointed by nature for an uninſtructed offspring introduced into a dangerous world, who himſelf takes upon him the office of ſeduction, is a monſter indeed. I alſo had a ſon. I was tenderly ſolicitous for the right conduct of his education. I intruſted him indeed to Cratippus at Athens; but, like you, I could not help tranſmitting inſtructions dictated by paternal love. Thoſe inſtructions are contained in my book of Offices; a book which has ever been cited by the world as a proof to what a height the morality of the heathens was advanced without the light of revelation. I own I feel a conſcious pride in it; not on account of the ability which it may diſplay, but for the principles it teaches, and the good, I flatter myſelf, it has diffuſed. You did not indeed intend your inſtructions for the world; but

but as you gave them to a ſon you loved, it may be concluded that you thought them true wiſdom, and withheld them only becauſe they were contrary to the profeſſions of the unenlightened. They have been generally read, and tend to introduce the manners, vices, and frivolous habits of the nation you admired, to your own manly nation, who, of all others, once approached moſt nearly to the noble ſimplicity of the Romans.

CHESTERFIELD.

Spare me, Cicero. I have never been accuſtomed to the rough converſation of an old Roman. I feel myſelf little in his company. I ſeem to ſhrink in his noble preſence. I never felt my inſignificance ſo forcibly as now. French courtiers and French philoſophers have been my models; and amid the diſſipation of pleaſure, and the hurry of affected vivacity, I never conſidered the gracefulneſs of virtue and the beauty of a manly character. I had a love of excellence, and with better models

ſhould have attained it. I ſee and venerate it in you, and I requeſt that you will not exert your eloquence to expoſe my futility, ſince I confeſs it; for I ſtill retain, and ſhall never loſe, that regard to character, which permits me not to ſubmit voluntarily to inſult and contempt.

ESSAY XXXIX.

ON THE PROPRIETY OF ADORNING LIFE BY SOME LAUDABLE EXERTION.

Is demum mihi vivere et frui animâ videtur, qui aliquo negotio intentus præclari facinoris aut artis bonæ famam quærit. SALLUST.

IN an age of degeneracy, when the native powers are weakened by vice, and habits of indolence are ſuperinduced by univerſal indulgence, the moraliſt can ſeldom expect to ſee examples of that unwearied perſeverance, of that generous exertion, which has ſometimes appeared in the world, and has been called heroic virtue. Indeed it muſt be allowed, that in the early periods of ſociety there is greater occaſion as well

as greater ſcope for public ſpirit, than when all its real wants are ſupplied, all its ſecurities eſtabliſhed, and little left for invention to introduce but refinements in luxury.

Under all theſe diſadvantages there is, indeed, little room for that uncommon exertion which leads a man to deſert his ſphere, and to act in contradiction to the maxims of perſonal intereſt and ſafety, with a view to reform the manners, or to promote the honour and advantage of the community. Patriotiſm, as it was underſtood and practiſed by a Brutus, a Curtius, a Scævola, or a Socrates, appears in modern times ſo eccentric a virtue, ſo abhorrent from the dictates of common ſenſe, that he who ſhould imitate it would draw upon himſelf the ridicule of mankind, and would be eſteemed a madman. Moral and political knight-errantry would appear in ſcarcely a leſs ludicrous light than the extravagancies of chivalry.

But to do good in an effectual and extenſive manner within the limits of profeſſional

profeſſional influence, and by performing the buſineſs of a ſtation, whatever it may be, not only with regular fidelity, but with warm and active diligence, is in the power, as it is the duty, of every individual. It is ſurely an unſatisfactory idea, to live and die without purſuing any other purpoſe than the low one of perſonal gratification. A thouſand pleaſures and advantages we have received from the diſintereſted efforts of thoſe who have gone before us, and it is incumbent on us to do ſomething in our generation, both for the benefit of contemporaries and of thoſe who are to follow.

To be born, as Horace ſays, merely to conſume the fruits of the earth*; to live, as Juvenal obſerves of ſome of his countrymen, with no other purpoſe than to gratify the palate†, though they may in reality be the ſole ends of many,

* ——— Fruges conſumere nati.

† ——— vivendi in cauſa palato eſt.

are yet too inglorious and diſgraceful to be avowed by the baſeſt of mankind.

There is little doubt, but that many, whoſe lives have glided away in an uſeleſs tenor, would have been glad of opportunities, if they could have diſcovered them, for laudable exertion. It is certainly true, that to qualify for political, military, literary, and patriotic efforts, peculiar preparations, accompliſhments, occaſions, and fortuitous contingencies are neceſſary. Civil wiſdom without civil employment, valour without an enemy, learning without opportunities for its diſplay, the love of our country without power, muſt terminate in abortive wiſhes, in deſigns unſupported by execution. They who form great ſchemes, and perform great exploits, muſt neceſſarily be few. But the exertions which benevolence points out, are extended to a great compaſs, are infinitely varied in kind and degree, and conſequently adapted in ſome mode or other to the ability of every individual.

To the diſtinguiſhed honour of our times and of our country, it muſt be aſſerted, that there is no ſpecies of diſtreſs which is not relieved; no laudable inſtitution which is not encouraged with an emulative ardour of liberality. No ſooner is a proper object of beneficence preſented to the public view, than ſubſcriptions are raiſed by all ranks, who crowd with impatience to the contribution. Not only the infirmities of age and ſickneſs are ſoothed by the beſt concerted eſtabliſhments, and the loſs ſuſtained by the calamities of a conflagration repaired; but our enemies, when reduced to a ſtate of captivity, are furniſhed with every comfort which their condition can admit, and all the malignity of party hatred melts into kindneſs under the operation of charity. From the accumulated efforts of a community of philanthropiſts, a ſum of good is produced, far greater than any recorded of the heroes of antiquity from Bacchus to Cæſar.

It has been ſaid, that the ages of extraordinary bounty are paſſed. No colleges are founded in the preſent times, it is true; yet not becauſe there is no public ſpirit remaining, but becauſe there is already a ſufficient number raiſed by the pious hands of our forefathers, to anſwer all the purpoſes of academical improvement. When a want is ſupplied, it is not parſimony but prudence which withholds additional bounty. The infirmaries diffuſed over every part of the kingdom, are moſt honourable teſtimonies of that virtue which is to cover a multitude of ſins. And there is one inſtance of beneficence uncommon both in its degree and circumſtances, which, though done without a view to human praiſe, muſt not loſe even the ſubordinate reward of human virtue. He who lately devoted, during his life, a noble fortune to the relief of the blind, will be placed higher in the eſteem of poſterity, than the numerous train of poſthumous benefactors, who gave what they could no longer

longer retain, and ſometimes from motives repreſented by the cenſorious as little laudable.

The motive of praiſe, though by no means the beſt, is a generous and a powerful motive of commendable conduct. He would do an injury to mankind who ſhould ſtifle the love of fame. It has burnt with ſtrong and ſteady heat in the boſoms of the moſt ingenuous. It has inſpired enthuſiaſm in the cauſe of all that is good and great. Where patience muſt have failed and perſeverance been wearied, it has urged through troubles deemed intolerable, and ſtimulated through difficulties dreaded as inſurmountable. Pain, penury, danger, and death, have been incurred with alacrity in the ſervice of mankind, with the expectation of no other recompence than an honourable diſtinction. And let not the frigidity of philoſophical rigour damp this noble ardour, which raiſes delightful ſenſations in the heart that harbours it, and gives riſe to all that is ſublime in life and in the arts.

When

When we are ſo far refined and ſubdued as to act merely from the ſlow ſuggeſtions of the reaſoning faculty, we ſhall indeed ſeldom be involved in error; but we ſhall as ſeldom atchieve any glorious enterpriſe, or ſnatch a virtue beyond the reach of prudence.

The ſpirit of adventure in literary undertakings, as well as in politics, commerce, and war, muſt not be diſcouraged. If it produces that which is worth little notice, neglect is eaſy. There is a great probability, however, that it will often exhibit ſomething conducive to pleaſure and improvement. But when every new attempt is checked by ſeverity, or regarded with indifference, learning ſtagnates, and the mind is depreſſed, till its productions ſo far degenerate as to juſtify diſregard. Taſte and literature are never long ſtationary. When they ceaſe to advance, they become retrograde.

Every liberal attempt to give a liberal entertainment is entitled to a kind excuſe, though its execution ſhould not have

have a claim to praiſe. For the ſake of encouraging ſubſequent endeavours, lenity ſhould be diſplayed where there is no appearance of incorrigible ſtupidity, of aſſuming ignorance, and of empty conceit. Severity chills the opening powers, as the froſt nips the bud that would elſe have been a bloſſom. It is blameable moroſeneſs to cenſure thoſe who ſincerely mean to pleaſe, and fail only from cauſes not in their own diſpoſal.

The praiſe, however, of well meaning has uſually been allowed with a facility of conceſſion which leads to ſuſpect that it was thought of little value. It has alſo been received with apparent mortification. This ſurely is the reſult of a perverted judgment; for intention is in the power of every man, though he cannot command ability.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 64. line 9. for *Sevigny* read *Sevigné*.
184. —— 18. place the asterism after *others*.
214. —— 7. after *whatever*, insert *merit*.
231. line 14. for *lunæ* read *exuviæ*.

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